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Winter-Evening
CONFERENCE
BETWEEN
Neighbours.

In Two Parts.
by John Goodman.

The Second Edition Corrected.

Prov. 27. 17.

*As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the counte-
nance of a man his friend.*



^a
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THE
PUBLISHER
TO THE
READER.

Courteous Reader,

I Must on the behalf of the Persons concerned in these Papers now in thy hands, bespeak thy Candour in two or three Particulars following.

First, That thou wilt not suffer thy Curiosity to carry thee so far as to be very inquisitive who they were or where they dwelt who held these Conferences; for besides that the knowledge thereof would be of no use, there are several other reasons why I cannot gratifie thee therein, further than by giving their true Characters, which thou wilt find subjoined.

A 2

Secondly,

The Publisher

Secondly, That whereas at the entrance of these Conferences, and perhaps also here and there in other parts of them, thou mayst observe some short touches of mirth, thou wilt not be offended at them as ill comporting either with the gravity of the Speakers, or the seriousness of the Design. For if thou consider the humour of the Age, thou wilt not find thy self obliged to impute it to the levity of Sebastian's temper, but to his discretion and wisdom, that he doth accommodate himself to those he would gain upon; as he that will catch Fish, must suit his Baits to their Gust and Phancy.

Thirdly, Because it is not unlikely but thou wilt take notice, that the Interlocutors do now and then upon occasion use complementary Attributions towards each other, and applaud one anothers Wit or Eloquence; which being now put in print, may to a severe Censor, seem to savour of ostentation, and look like clawing and flattering one another. Therefore thou art desired to remember, that this was done only amongst themselves

to the Reader.

selves and in private Conversation, where such kinds of Civility are usually practised without offence or imputation.

As for the general Design of these Conferences, I make bold to tell thee, that it is apparently noble and generous, namely, to lead the way to more manly Conversation, especially amongst the better ranks of men, to demonstrate that the strictest Virtue is consistent with the greatest Prudence and Civility; and in short, to raise the dejected and depressed Spirit of Piety in the World. The consideration hereof encouraged the Publication, and I hope will sufficiently recommend it to thy Acceptance.

Farewel.

The

*The Characters of the Persons in the two
following Conferences.*

S*ebastian* a Learned and pious Gentleman, who takes all occasions of ingaging those he converses with, in sobriety and a sense of Religion.

Philander a Gentile and ingenuous Person, but too much addicted to the lightnesses of the Age, till reclaimed by the Conversation of *Sebastian*.

Biophilus a Sceptical Person, who had no settled Belief of any thing; but especially was averse to the great Doctrines of Christianity, concerning the Immortality of the Soul and the life to come: and therefore consequently was much concerned for the present life. Till at length awakened by the discreet Reasonings of *Sebastian*, and the affectionate Discourses of *Philander*, he begins to deliberate of what before he despised.

Eulabes a truly prudent and holy Man, who made his life a study of and preparation for Death, propounded as an Example for Imitation, in the second Conference.

The

The Argument of the first Conference.

Sebastian *visiting his Neighbour Philander,* after a little time spent in Civil Salutations, is quickly prest by him to the too usual Entertainment of liberal Drinking : which Sebastian at first modestly and facetiously declines ; but afterwards more directly shews the folly and unmanliness of it. He is then invited to Gaming, which he also excusing himself from, and giving his reasons against : Philander complains of the difficulty of spending time without such diversions. Whereupon Sebastian represents to him sundry Entertainments of Time both more delightful and more profitable than the forementioned, amongst which, that of friendly and ingenuous Discourse : and from thence they are led on to debate about Religious Conference; the Usefulness, Easiness, Prudence and Gentility of which are largely demonstrated : of which Philander being convinced, inquires the way of entring into it, of continuing and managing of it. In which being instructed by Sebastian, he resolves to put it in practice.

The

The Argument of the Second Conference.

In the former Conference, Sebastian having convinced Philander of the great importance of Religion, and the wisdom of making it as well the Subject of Social Communication as of retired Meditation: Accordingly they two meet on purpose this second time to confer about it. But Biophilus, a sceptical person, being in their Company, he at first diverts them from their design by other Discourse; till after a while, under the disguise of News, he is wheedled into this Subject before he was aware: And then he puts them upon the proof of those Principles which they would have supposed. Upon this occasion the foundations of Religion are searched into, and particularly that Great Point concerning A Judgment to come, is substantially proved: Which being done, and Biophilus thereby rendered somewhat more inclinable to be serious, they then pursue their first intentions, and discourse warmly and sensibly of another World, and of the necessary preparations for it, so long till they not only inflame their own hearts with devotion, but strike some sparks of it into Biophilus also.

A
 Winter-Evening
CONFERENCE
 BETWEEN
 Two Neighbours
 AT
PHILANDER's House.

Sebastian.

A Good Evening to you, Good
Philander, I am glad to find
 you in Health, and I hope
 all your Family is so too.

Philander. I humbly thank you, Sir, we are
 all well (God be praised) and the better to see
 you here; for I hope you come with intentions
 to give us the diversion of your good Company
 this long Evening.

Sebast. If that will do you any pleasure, I am
 at your Service. For to deal plainly, I came
 with the resolution to spend an hour or two
 with you; provided, it be not unseasonable for
 your occasions; nor intrench upon any business
 of your Family.

B

Phil.

Phil. Business, Sir! at this time of the Year we are even weary with rest, and tired with having nothing to do.

Sebast. It is a time of leisure I confess, the Earth rests, and so do we; yet I thank God my time never lies upon my hands, for I can always find something or other to employ my self in. When the Fields lye dead and admit of no husbandry, I then can cultivate the little Garden of my own Soul; and when there is no recreation abroad, I have a Company of honest old Fellows in Leathern Coats which find me diversion at home.

Phil. I know the Company you mean, though I confess I have not much acquaintance with them; but do you not find it a melancholy thing to converse with the dead?

Sebast. Why should you say they are dead? no, they are immortal, they cannot dye, they are all soul; reason without passion, and eloquence without noise or clamour. Indeed they do not eat and drink, by which only Argument some men now a-days prove themselves to be alive, as *Cyrus* proved the Divinity of his God *Bel*. But these are kept without cost, and yet retain the same countenance and humour, and are always chearful and diverting. Besides, they have this peculiar quality, that a man may have their Company, or lay them aside at pleasure without Offence. Notwithstanding, I must needs acknowledge I prefer the Company of a good Neighbour before them; and particularly I am well satisfied that I cannot spend this Evening better than in your conversation, and I am confident I shall sleep well at night, if first some friendly Offices pass between us.

Phil.

Phil. You doubly oblige me, good *Sebastian*, first in your great condescension to make me this kind visit, and then in forsaking so good Company for mine.

Sebast. Your great Courtesie, *Philander*, interprets that to be an obligation upon your self, which is but self-love in me: for truly I am sensible that so great a part of the comfort of life depends upon a mans good correspondence with those that are near about him, that I think I cannot love my self unless I love my Neighbour also. And now, Sir, if you please, let us upon this occasion improve our Neighbourhood to a more intimate friendship, so that you and I who have hitherto lived peaceably and inoffensively by each other, may henceforth become mutually useful and serviceable to one another.

Phil. O good *Sebastian*, you talk of self-love, but I shall be so far from it, that I must hate my self, and that deservedly too, if I lay not hold of so advantageous a proposal.

Sebast. Dear Neighbour, no Complements I beseech you, that will spoil our design, and continue us strangers to each other.

Phil. If I were used to Complement, yet I should be ashamed to make so superficial a return to an overture of so much kindness and reality; but I am plain and hearty, and heartily I embrace both your self and your motion.

Maid, make us a good Fire.

Come Sir, what will you drink?

Sebast. All in good time, Sir.

Phil. Nay never in better time; now is the season of drinking; we must imitate the Plants, and now suck in sap to serve us all the Year after: if you will flourish in the Spring, you

must take in good juices in the Winter.

Sebast. You seem, *Philander*, to dream of a dry Summer; however I'll pledge you, for I am sure the Winter is cold.

Phil. Well, Sir, here is that will abate the edge of the weather, be it as sharp as it can. This drink will make the Evenings warm, and the Nights short in spite of the season.

Sebast. That would be a pleasant experiment, but have you tried it?

Phil. Yes very often, *probatum est*; but then you must take the full dose. Come fear it not, this will breed good Blood, cure Melancholy, and is the only Cement of good Neighbourhood.

The tipling humour of the age exposed.

Sebast. Why then I hope our friendship will be lasting, for the Cement (as you call it) is very strong.

Phil. You are pleasant, *Sebastian*: but now that you and I are together, and under the Rose too (as they say) why should not we drink somewhat briskly? we shall know one another and love one another the better ever after. For, let me tell you, this will open our hearts, and turn our very insides outward.

Sebast. That trick, *Philander*, I confess I have seen plaid, but I thought it a very unseemly one.

Phil. I doubt you mistake me, I mean only that a liberal Glass will take off all reservedness in our conversation.

Sebast. I understand you, good Neighbour, but with your Pardon I must needs tell you, that I have never been able to observe the Glass you speak of, to be so exact a mirror of minds,
but

but as often to disfigure and disguise men, as truly to represent them. Have you not found some men, who upon an infusion in strong liquor, have seemed for the present to be totally dissolved into kindness and good nature; and yet as soon as ever the drink is squeezed out of these sponges, they become again as dry, as hard, and as rough as a Pumice, and as intractable as ever. Others you shall observe to Hector and Swagger in their drink, as if they were of the highest Mettle and most redoubted Courage, whose spirits nevertheless evaporating with their Wine, they prove as tame errand Cowards as any are in Nature. Perhaps also you may have taken notice of a maudlin kind of Soakers, who commonly relent when they are well moistned, as if they shrunk in the wetting; and will at such times seem to be very devout and religious, and yet for all this they continue as sottish as ever, as impenitent as a weeping Wall, and as insensible as the groaning Plank. Contrariwise there are some men, who in the general habit of their lives, appear to be very discreet and ingenious persons; yet if contrary to their custome, they have the misfortune to be surprized with drink, they become as dull as Dormice, as flat and insipid as Pompions.

I cannot think therefore that this Drink Ordeal is so infallible a test of mens tempers as you imagine; or if it were, yet there is no need of it between you and me: We can candidly and sincerely lay open our bosoms to each other, without having a confession of our Sentiments forced from us, by this new-fashioned Dutch Torture.

Phil. I must needs confess, *Sebastian*, that you

raillé at Tipling with so good a grace, that I cannot be sorry I gave you the occasion: but still I doubt you mistake me, I am not for scandalous and debauched drinking, but in a civil way between friends, to make our spirits light and our hearts chearful.

Sebast. And, good *Philander*, do not mistake me, I am not of that morose humour to condemn all chearfulness; neither do I take upon me to prescribe to every man his just dose, or think a man must divide by an hair, or be intemperate. I account good Wine as necessary as good Meat, and in some cases more necessary: neither do I doubt but a man may make use of it with a good deal of prudent liberty; for I do not look upon the Fruit of the Vine, as the forbidden Fruit, or think so hardly of God Almighty, as if he gave us so good a Creature only to tempt and insnare us. Yet on the other side, I am perswaded, that a man may love his House, though he doth nor ride upon the ridge of it; and can by no means be of their opinion, who fantasie there is no freedom but in a debauch, no sincerity without a surfeit, or no chearfulness whilst men are in their right wits. And I look upon the very conceit of this as reproachful both to God and Man, but the practice of it I am sure is the bane of all manly conversation.

Phil. I have known some men oppose one vice with another as bad or worse; and who whilst they railed at drinking, have in effect only made Apologies for ill nature: but you, *Sebastian*, though you speak some very severe things, yet temper them with so much humanity, that I feel a kind of Pleasure, even then when you touch me to the quick; therefore you
that

that have so much good nature your self, will, I presume, make some allowances to complaisance in others.

Sebast. Far be it from me to undervalue good nature, which I have in so great esteem, that I scarcely think any thing is good without it; It is the very air of a good mind, the sign of a large and generous Soul, and the peculiar Soil on which Virtue prospers. And as for that genuine fruit of it *Of good nature and complaisance.* Complaisance, I take it (if it be rightly understood) to be that which above all things renders a man both amiable and useful in the World, and which as well sweetens as facilitates conversation: but the mischief is (as it generally happens to all excellent things) there is a counterfeit which (assuming the name) passes current for it in the World, by which men become impotent and incapable of withstanding any importunities be they never so unreasonable, or resisting any temptations be they never so dangerous; but as if they were cripled in their powers, or crazed in their minds, are wholly governed by example, and sneakingly conform themselves to other mens humours and vices; and in a word, become every mans fool that hath the confidence to impose upon them. Now this is so far from that lovely masculine temper of true complaisance, that it is indeed no better than a childish bashfulness, a feeble pusillanimity and silly softness of mind, which makes a man first the slave and property, and then at last the scorn of his Company. Wherefore it is the part of a good-natured man, neither so rigidly to insist upon the punctilio's of his liberty or property, as to refuse a Glass recommended

commended to him by civility; nor yet on the other side, to be either Hectored or wheedled out of his Christian name (as we say) and sheepishly submit himself to be taxed in his drink, or other indifferent things at other mens pleasure. And if he shall fall into the company of those, who shall assume to themselves such an Arbitrary Power, as to assess him at their own rate, and prescribe their measures to him; I do not doubt but that with a *salvo* both to good nature and civility, he may and ought so far to assert his own Dominion over himself, as with a generous disdain to reject the imposition, and look upon the imposers as equally tyrannical and impertinent with those who would prescribe to me to eat their proportions of Meat, or to wear my Clothes just of their size.

Phil. O Sir, your discourse is brave and wise and virtuous, but one thing is wanting to make me your Profelyte, which is, that I doubt it is not practicable; you cannot certainly but be sensible how difficult a thing it is for modesty and good nature to oppose the prevailing humour of the age, which in plain truth is such; that now adays a man looks very oddly that keeps any strict measures of drinking.

Sebast. I am afraid it is too true which you say, and though I have no mind to reproach, or much less to quarrel with the Age we live in; yet I confess to you, it is matter of regret and disdain to me to observe skill in good liquors ambitiously pretended to, as if it were a very considerable point of knowledge: and good drinking looked upon as so important an affair of humane life, that that time seems to be lost, in which the Glas goes not round, and the Cup
and

and the Bottle seem to be the Hour-glass or the only measure of time. And this I the more wonder at, because the Air, the Climate, the constitutions of mens Bodies are not changed, and the Laws of Temperance are the same they were wont to be: and besides all this, I do ingenuously acknowledge the Age to be extraordinarily polite and ingenious; I would therefore very fain know, but have not hitherto been able to satisfy my self, from what causes this change of mens manners in this particular hath arisen, and what hath brought this Tipling humour into fashion.

Apologies for tippling baffled.

Phil. You need not ask my opinion, for you have answered your self; it is a fashion, and that you know is changeable without observable causes; but because, perhaps, you think my unhappy experience may inable me to say something in the case, I will tell you: Fashions, you know, are commonly taken up for distinction sake; for men do not love to appear in the Garb of those whom they hate or despise. Now there are a melancholy sort of People amongst us, that are wonderfully precise in their way; men of a kind of Lessian Conscience, that pretend to do all things by measure, and indeed weigh every thing by scruples, and consequently (whatever they are towards themselves) are very severe in their censures of other men; insomuch, that whatsoever is not just after their mode and humour, especially if it look never so little airy and light, they presently damn it as flat immorality and debauchery. These men (however some of them may be well meaning and pitiable)

pitiable) you will easily grant must needs be very troublesome in the World. But then there is another sort of men, who being of a more sanguine and cheerful temper, are not so strait-laced in their Principles, and consequently are apt to indulge themselves a far greater liberty of conversation; and in detestation of the former, whom they observe to be often absurd and unreasonable, but always hide-bound and phantastical, do (as it is too usual in such cases) run out upon some extremity on the other side; and so in short, it seems to me that unnecessary scrupulosity hath given occasion and countenance to its direct contrary; and thus that Tippling humour, as you call it, hath become the prevailing fashion.

Sebast. In truth, *Philander*, the account you have given is ingenious, and not improbable: But, Lord, what a misery is it that men must always be upon extremes! is there no middle? cannot men be merry and wise too? is there any necessity that every man must be intoxicated one way or other? if one sort be silly, must the other be mad? or if they be mad, must these be drunk? For my part, I cannot tell whether to call this, distinction (as you do) or imitation, or infection, or fascination, or what you will, but sure I am, they are both very vitious and absurd.

Phil. Nay, *Sebastian*, I will not take upon me altogether to justify the practice of the one more than the other; but now I am in, I will (with your leave) give you notice of another thing, that is thought to have a considerable stroke in this business, and may in some measure mitigate your censure of the Good Fellows.

It

It is the observation of wise men, that generally the customes of people were taken up at first upon the account of some natural necessity or defect (as we see generally Art supplies and perfects Nature) Now you know we live in a cold Climate, and consequently must needs have dull flegmatick Bodies, the influence of which upon our minds is easily discernable (amongst other instances) by that extreme modesty and bashfulness, which is almost equally common to us all, and peculiar to all that are of this Country, and which ordinarily tongue-ties us in all good Company, until Wine have warmed us, and dissolved that ligament; so that it should seem that drinking is not altogether blame-worthy, as being more necessary to us than to most other People, if it were but to make us sprightly and conversable: for as on the one side, you cannot expect that all men should be able to converse together like a company of dry Philosophers; so on the other, I know you would not have Englishmen, when they are in Company, hold a silent Quakerly Meeting.

Sebast. Now, *Philander*, you have mended the matter finely; to avoid my censure of the good Fellows (as you call them) you have censured the whole Nation as a generation of dull Sotts; and represented your Countrymen as a sort of People newly fashioned out of clay, and just able to stand upright, but into whom God Almighty hath put no Soul at all, but left that to be extracted out of the Spirit of Wine, by which means when we have attained it (and not till then, it seems) we may become like other folks. But in the mean time, I wonder what became of all our sober Ancestors, and particularly

larly of the dry race of Queen *Elizabeth* men (as they are called) I cannot find but they had as much Soul and Spirit as the present generation (however they came by it) though they never made Alembicks of themselves. But in earnest *Philander*, I will confess ingenuously to you, that as for such a dull sort of earthly men as you speak of, I should not be much offended with them, if they now and then got a little froth into their heads, to supply their defect of Brains; and if upon that occasion, they grew somewhat conceited and impertinent, the matter were not much, though the Metamorphosis might seem strange, for a dull Ass to become an Ape or a Monkey: But then for the same reason, the finer Wits (and surely some such there be) should let it alone; for that rational and ingenious men shou'd by this Cup of *Circe*, the Magical power of Wine, be transformed into such kind of Animals, methinks it is a thousand pities. But why do you smile, *Philander*?

Phil Even at my self, good *Sebastian*, or at least at that picture you have drawn for me; it would look a little ambitiously, if I should compare my self to the land of *Egypt*, which, they say, was fruitful in proportion to its being overflowed; but in plain truth, I am such a spot of Earth, as will bear nothing unless it be well watered; and to countenance my self in this condition, though I cannot pretend to learning, yet I remember I have heard that the gravest Philosophers did use to water their Plants (as we say) and sometimes Philosophized over a Glass of Wine.

Sebast. And why not over a Glass of Wine, as well as by a Fire side? provided a man take care,

care, that as by the one he does not burn his Shins, so by the other he do not over-heat his Head; or to follow your Metaphor, provided a man only water the soil, and do not drown it. You know it is only extreams that I find fault with, when men will be always sipping and dabling, as if their Bodies were nothing but Pipes made on purpose to transmit Liquors through; or as if they had their Life and Soul transfused into them from the Hogthead.

Phil. Well, Sir, I perceive I am likely to get nothing by my fine figure; I will therefore say no more of my self; but I have heard some others say, they have always found their reason to be strongest, when their spirits were most exalted.

Sebast. But sure they did not mean that their reason was strongest, when the Wine was too strong for them; if they did, then either their reason was very small at the best, and nothing so strong as their drink, or else we are quite mistaken in the names of things; and so in plain English, drunkenness is sobriety, and sobriety drunkenness: for who can imagine, that that which clouds the head, should inlighten the mind; and that which wildly agitates the spirits, should strengthen the understanding; or that a coherent thred of discourse, should be spun by a shattered vertiginous brain? It is possible some odd crotchets and whimsys may at such times be raised together with the fumes; or it is not unlikely, but that a man may then seem wondrous wise in his own eyes, when he shall appear very silly and ridiculous to all others that are not in the same condition with himself; but to go about to make any thing better

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better of it, is a kind of liquid Enthusiasm. And that this is no wild conjecture or uncharitable opinion of mine, I appeal to this experiment; tell me, good *Philander*, what is the reason that men in those jollities (we speak of) cannot endure the company of those that will not take their share with them, but are most pleased with such as will rather exceed their measure, and take off their Cups roundly; is it think you out of desire that such men should be wiser than themselves, or the quite contrary? or what is the reason that men of this Practice are very shy of those persons that will remember and repeat afterwards the passages in those merry assignations? I make no doubt, but when you have considered the case, you will find this to lye at the bottom, namely, that even such persons are sensible that several things pass amongst them at such times for wit and good humour, which when they hear of again, and reflect upon in their sober intervals, they are heartily ashamed of, as apish and ridiculous fooleries.

But now if (after all) I should grant you (which I do not unwillingly) that men well whetted with Wine (as they love to speak) are very sharp and piquant, very jocose and ready at a repartée, or such like; yet besides that this edge is so thin and Razor-like, that it will serve to no manly purposes; it is also very dangerous, since at that time a wife man hath it not in keeping.

Phil. Well, I perceive hitherto the edge of my Arguments turns at the force of your Replies; therefore I had best contend no longer with you on that point, whether Wine raises mens parts or

no:

no: But one thing I have yet to say, which I am sure you must and will grant me, *viz.* that it suppresses cares and melancholy, and makes a man forget his sorrows (that great disease of humane life) and this I suppose sufficiently commends the liberal use of it.

Sebast. That which you now say is undeniably true; and no question, for this very end was the juice of the Grape principally ordained by the great Creator of the World; but yet I know not how it comes to pass, that this remedy is seldome made use of, by those to whom it was peculiarly prescribed; I mean, the melancholy and dejected have ordinarily the least share of it; but it is very commonly taken by the prosperous, the sanguine and debonair, and such as have least need of it; and these frequently take it in such large proportions, that it makes them not only forget their sorrows (if they had any) but themselves and their business too. So that upon the whole matter, I see no tolerable account can be given of the way of drinking now in fashion; for it appears to have been taken up upon no necessity; it is recommended by no real advantage, either to the body or mind, and therefore must owe its rise to no better causes than dullness or idleness, a silly obsequiousness to other mens humours, or epicurism and wantonness of our own inclination. And for the habit of it, it is no better than a lewd artifice to avoid thinking, a way for a man to get shut of himself and of all sober considerations.

*The real causes of
tipsing intima-
ted, and the mis-
chiefs of it exag-
gerated.*

It fills men with more spirits than it leaves them able to govern; from whence they become
great

great talkers, proud boasters, capricious, insolent and quarrelsome. For it so much dilates and rarifies the Spirits, that they cannot bear up a weighty thought; and while such as those are sunk and drowned, nothing but the mere froth and folly of mens hearts bubbles up in their conversation. And this insensibly growing upon men, by degrees introduces an habitual vanity and impertinence, below the gravity and dignity of humane nature; and by means of which, such men become fit only for toys and trifles, for apish tricks and buffoonly discourse; which in conclusion, do so far degrade a man below his quality, that he becomes not only a shame to himself and his family, but the contempt of his very servants and dependants

And touching this last; have you not sometime observed, what dry bobs, and sarcastical jeers the most underling fellows will now and then bestow upon their betters, when they have found them faulting in this kind: *Was not Master such a one crulley cut last night, says one? How like a drowned Rat was Master such a one, says another? How wisely our Master looks when he hath got his dose, saith a third?*

Shall I need after all this, to represent the sin committed against God Almighty, by this vain custome, in the breach of his Laws, deforming his Image, and quenching his Spirit; or the injury it doth to humane Society, in the riotous and profuse expence of so comfortable a Cordial and support of humane life; or, shall I but reckon up the mischiefs a man hereby incurs to his own person, the danger of his health, the damage to his fortunes, the —

Phil. O, no more, no more, good *Sebastian*,
I am

I am yours; you have silenced, you have vanquished me; I am not able to resist the evidence of truth in your Discourse, you have quite marr'd a Good-fellow, and spoil'd my Drinking.

But how then shall I treat you? Come, you are for serious things, what say you to a Game at Tables? Methinks that is both a grave and a pleasant entertainment of the time.

Sebast. Truly, Sir, I am so unskilful at that and most other Games, that I should rather give you trouble than diversion at it.

But what need you be solicitous for my Entertainment? It is your Company only which I desire: And methinks it looks as if Friends were weary one of the other, when they fall to Gaming.

Of Gaming, and particularly, of Chance-Games.

Phil. But I should think a man of your temper might have a phancy for this Game, as upon other respects, so especially because it seems to be a pretty Emblem of the World.

Sebast. As how, I pray you, Sir?

Phil. Why, in the first place, the casual agitation of the Dice in the Box, which unaccountably produceth such or such a Lott, seems to me to represent the Disposal of that Invisible Hand which orders the Fortunes of Men. And then the dexterous management of that Lott or Cast by the Gamester plainly resembles the use and efficacy of humane prudence and industry in the conduct of a Man's own Fortunes.

Sebast. I perceive, *Philander*, that you play like a Philosopher as well as a Gamester; but in my opinion you have forgotten the main resemblance

semblance of all, which is, That the Clatter and Noise in tossing and tumbling the Dice and Table-men up and down, backward and forward, lively describes the hurry and tumult of this World, where one Man goes up, and another tumbles down; one is dignified and preferred, another is degraded; that man reigns and triumphs, this man frets and vexes; the one laughs, the other repines: and all the rest tug and scuffle to make their advantage of one another. Let this, if you please, be added to the Moral of your Game. But when all is done, I must tell you, for my part I am not so much taken with the Original as to be fond of the Type or Effigies; I mean, I am not so in love with the World, as to take any great delight in seeing it brought upon the Stage, and acted over again: But had much rather retreat from it, when I can, and give my self the contentment of repose, and quiet thoughts.

Phil. However, I hope you are not offended at my mention of that Game. You do not think it unlawful to use such diversion?

Sebast. No, Dear *Phil.* I am not of that austere humour to forbid delightful Exercises; for I am sensible, that whilst Men dwell in Bodies, it is fit they not only keep them up in necessary reparation by Meat and drink, but also make them as lightsome and chearful as they can, otherwise the Mind will have but an uncomfortable Tenancy. The Animal Life, I say, must be considered as well as the Intellectual, and our Spirits have need to be relaxed sometimes, lest the keeping them continually intent weaken and infeeble them so, that they cannot serve us in greater purposes; I would therefore as
soon

soon universally forbid all Physick, as all kind of Exercise and Diversion ; and indeed rather of the two, for I think the latter may in a great measure save the trouble of the former, but that will do little or no good without this.

Neither do I think even those Games of Chance absolutely unlawful ; I have sometimes made use of this in particular which you mention, or the like to it, upon some occasions : As for instance, when I took Physick, and could neither be allowed to walk abroad, nor to be serious and thoughtful within Doors ; I have supplied both for that time, with a Game at Tables. Or, it may be, when I have happened to be engaged in some kind of Company, I have play'd, not so much to divert my self with the Game, as to divert the Company from something that was worse. But to deal freely with you : Though I do not altogether condemn, yet I cannot very much commend these kind of Sports ; for indeed I scarce think them Sports, they are rather a counterfeit kind of business, and weary ones head as much as real study and business of importance. So that in the use of them a man only puts a cheat upon himself and tickles himself to death ; for by applying himself for delight to these busie and thoughtful Games, he becomes like a Candle lighted at both ends, and must needs be quickly wasted away between Jest and earnest, whenas both his Cares and his Delights prey upon him.

Besides, I observe, that Diversions of this nature having so much of Chance and surprize in them, do generally too much raise the passions of men, which it were fitter by all Arts and endeavours to charm down and suppress. For to

say nothing of the usual accidents of common Gaming-Houses, which (as I have heard from those that knew too well) are the most lively Pictures of Hell upon Earth, and where it is ordinary for men to rave, swear, curse and blaspheme, as if the Devil was indeed amongst them, or the men were transformed into Infernal Spirits; I have seen sad Examples of Extravagance in the more modest and private, but over eager pursuits of these recreations. In-
 somuch, that sometimes a well-tempered person hath quite lost all command of himself at them. So that you might see his Eyes fiery, his Colour inflamed, his Hands to tremble, his Breath to be short, his Accents of Speech fierce and violent; by all which and abundance more ill-favoured symptoms, you might conclude his heart to be hot, and his thoughts solicitous, and indeed the whole man, Body and Soul, to be in an Agony. Now will you call this a recreation, or a rack and torture rather? A rack certainly; which makes a man betray those follies which every Wise-man seeks to conceal, and heightens those passions which every good man endeavours to subdue.

And, which is yet worse, (as I was saying) this course looks like the accustoming of the Beast to be rampant, and to run without the Rein. For by indulging our passions in jest we get an habit of them in earnest, and accordingly shall find our selves to be enclined to be wrathful, peevish and clamorous, when we apply our selves to business, or more grave conversation.

To all which add, That Gaming (and especially at such Games as we are speaking of) doth insensibly steal away too much of our time
 from

from better business, and tempts us to be Prodigals and Bankrupts of that which no Good Fortune can ever redeem or repair. And this is so notoriously true, that there is hardly any man who sets himself down to these Pastimes (as they are called) that can break off and recal himself when he designed so to do. Forasmuch as either by the too great intention of his mind, he forgets himself; or the anger stirred up by his misfortunes, and the indignation to go off baffled, suffers him not to think of any think but revenge, and reparation of his losses; or the hopes he is fed withal trolls him on, or some witchery or other transports him so besides his first resolutions, that business, health, family, friends, and even the worship of God it self, are all superseded and neglected for the sake of this paltry Game.

All which considered, I am really afraid there is more of the Devil in it than we are ordinarily aware of, and that it is a temptation of his to engage us in that, where he that wins most is sure to lose that which is infinitely of more value. Therefore upon the whole matter I think it much safer to keep out of the lists than to engage, where besides the greatness of the stake a man cannot bring himself off again without so great difficulty.

Pardon me, Dear *Philander*; if my zeal or indignation (or what you will call it) hath transported me in this Particular; sure I am I have no intention to reproach your practice, nor to affront you for your motioning this sport to me, but speak out of hearty good will, and to give you caution.

Phil. O *Sebastian*! I love you dearly, and
 C 3 thank

thank you heartily for the freedom you have used with me. We good natur'd men, (as the World flatters us, and we love to be stiled) considering little or nothing our selves, and having seldom the happiness of discreet and faithful Friends that will have so much concern for us as to admonish us of our imprudences and our dangers, as if we were mere Machines, move just as other men move and prompt us, and so drink, play, and do a thousand follies for Company sake, and under the countenance of one anothers example: God forgive me; I have too often been an instance of that which you now intimated: I therefore again and again thank you for your advice, and hope I shall remember as long as I live what you have said on this occasion.

But that you may work a perfect Cure upon me, I will be so true to my self as to acquaint you faithfully with what I apprehend to be the Cause of this Epidemical Distemper. I find the

*Want of business,
the occasion of
Drinking and
Gaming.*

common and most irresistible temptation both to Drinking and Gaming, is the unskilfulness of such men as my self to employ our time without such kind of diversions, especially at this season of the Year when the dark and long Evenings, foul Ways and sharp Weather, drive us into Clubs and Combinations. If therefore you will deal freely and friendly with me herein, and by your prudence help me over this difficulty, you will exceedingly oblige me, and do an act worthy of your self, and of that kindness which brought you hither.

Sebast. There is nothing, Dear *Phil.* within
my

my power which you may not command me in. Nor is there any thing wherein I had rather serve you (if I could) than in a business of this nature. But all I can do, and as I think all that is needful in this Case, is to desire you to consider on it again, and then I hope you will find the difficulty not so insuperable as you imagine. It is very true, Idleness is more painful than hard labour, and nothing is more wearisome than having nothing to do: besides, as a rich Soil will be sure to bring forth Weeds, if it be not sowed with more profitable Seed; so the active Spirits in Man will be sure to prompt him to evil, if they be not employed in doing good. For the Mind can no more bear a perfect cessation and intermission, than the World a *Vacuum*.

But this difficulty which you represent generally, presses young men only: These indeed having more Sail than Ballast, I mean, having a mighty vigour and abundance of Spirits, but not their minds furnished with a sufficient stock of knowledge and experience to govern and employ those active Spirits upon; no wonder if such persons, rather than do just nothing, and in defect of real business, do greedily catch at those shadows and resemblances of it, (as I remember you ingeniously called Drinking and Gaming.) Besides, these sort of persons seeming to themselves to have a great deal of time before them, are easily drawn to spend it the more lavishly, as out of an unmeasurable Store. But what is all this to men that are entred into real business, and have concerns under their hand, and the luxuriancy of whose Spirits is taken off by cares and experience, and especially who

cannot (without unpardonable stupidity) but be sensible how daily the time and Age of man wears away. Now I say why time should be so burthensom to such as these, or what should betray them to such infrugal expences of it, I profess for my part I can give no account, without making severe reflections on their discretion.

Phil. Assign what causes of it you can, or make what reflections upon it you please, however the matter of fact is certainly true in the general, That a Gentlemans time is his burden, (whether he be young or old) and the want of Employment for it, his great temptation to several extravagances.

Sebast. I must believe it to be as you say, because you know the World better than I do, and I am confident you will not misreport it.

*A Gentleman's
Life as busie as
other mens.*

But really, *Phil.* it is very strange it should be so; and I am sure cannot be verified without very ingrateful returns to the Divine bounty, which hath made so liberal and ample provisions for the delight and contentment of such persons far above the rate of others. It is true, they have less bodily labour, and no drudgery, to exhaust their time and spirits upon, (and that methinks should be no grievance) but then the prudent management of a plentiful Fortune, (if things be rightly considered) doth not take up much less time than the poor mans labour for necessities of Life. For what with securing the Patrimony and husbanding the Revenue, what with letting and setting his Lands, and building and repairing his Houses, what with planting Walks, and beautifying

fyng his Gardens, what with accommodating himself according to his Quality, and hospitably treating his Friends and Neighbours according to theirs; and, to say no more, what with keeping Accounts of all this, and governing a numerous and well-fed Family, I am of opinion, that (all this taken together) the Gentleman hath indeed the more pleasant, but a no less busie Employment of his time than other men: insomuch that I cannot but suspect that he must be deficient in some principal Branch of good Husbandry, and defrauds his business that surfeits on leisure.

Moreover, as Divine Bounty hath exempted such men as we speak of from the common sweat and anxiety of Life, by those large Patrimonies his Providence and the care of Parents hath provided to their hands; so the same Divine Majesty hath thereby obliged them, and it is accordingly expected from them by the World, that they be more publickly serviceable to their Prince and Country, in Magistracy, in making Peace, and several ways assisting Government, and promoting the ends of humane Society: upon which account as it is very unjust that others should envy and malign them for their enjoyments, so it is apparent also, that they are so far from having less to do than their Inferiors, that on the contrary the Gentlemans Life seems to be far the busier of the two.

Besides all this, Gentlemen, having usually more ingenuous Education, and consequently are presumed to have more exercised and improved minds, may therefore be able to employ themselves, if all other business ceased, and fill up the vacant spaces of their time with
such

such delightful and profitable entertainments as others are incapable of.

Phil. That, Sir, that last Point is the thing I would fain learn, namely, how to fill up the vacant spaces of Life (as you call it) so as to leave no room for temptation to debauchery.

Sebast. I am heartily glad to see you of that mind ; but I assure my self there is nothing I can say to it, but what your own discretion will prevent me in. However, if it be your desire that I should enlighten your thoughts by opening of my own, we will then, if you please, examine

*An estimate or
account of the
time and business
of mans Life.*

this matter between us, and by that time we have compared the Period of our Lives with the variety of business that occurs in it, I am out of all doubt

that you will be then thoroughly satisfied that we have neither so much time as to be a burden to us, nor if it were more than it is, should we be at a loss for the bestowing of it. And this, without resorting to any of the extravagances afore-mentioned.

Let us then in the first place suppose that the Lives of Men at this Age of the World, and particularly in this Climate and Country, amount commonly to seventy years; for though it is possible here and there one out-lives that term, yet it is pretty evident by the most probable Calculations, that there is not above one man in thirty or thereabouts that arrives at that Age: However, I say, let us, at present, suppose that to be the common Standard.

Now to discover what an inconsiderable duration this is, let us but ask the opinion of those that have arrived at it, and they will assuredly tell

tell us, that all that whole term when it is past seems to be a very short stage, and quickly run over; or if we had rather trust to our own experience, let us look back upon twenty or thirty years of our own lives, which though it bear a very great proportion towards the Lease of our whole Lives, yet when it is over seems to be but a little while to us, and that Time, as it is usually pictured, fled upon Wings——

Phil. I pray pardon me, if I a little interrupt the thread of your Discourse; you may easily continue it again, and for failing I will remember where you left off. That which I would say by the way is this, I can verifie the truth of what you were supposing, by my own experience, and have often wondered what should be the reason of it, that men have quite different apprehensions of time past and time to come. When we look back (as you well observe) upon twenty or thirty years which are gone, they seem but a trice to us; but if we look forward, and forethink of so many years to come, we are apt to phansie we have an Ocean before us, and such a vast prospect that we can see no end of it. Now I ask your opinion what it is that puts such a fallacy upon us, for other it cannot be; forasmuch as the same term of years, whether it be reckoned forward or backward, past or to come, must needs really be of the same length and duration.

Sebast. It is verily so as you say, and the Observation is very ingenious and pertinent to the business in hand. But to give you an account of the reason of that different estimate, I can say but these two things, *viz.* Either as it is in
the

the nature of hope to flatter us, so all things seem bigger at a distance, and whilst they are in expectation only, than what we can find them to be in fruition. Or else it must be, that what is past of our lives we have fresh and lively remarks upon, by remembring the notable passages that have fallen out within that compass, by which means those equally remote portions of time are brought near to our eye.

But on the contrary in the time which is to come, we can have no remarks upon it ; because not knowing what shall happen, we have nothing to fix our thoughts upon, and so it looks like a vast Ocean to us. For you know that things which are in confusion seem to be more than the same things when they are digested into just order and method. And in travelling, you observe that twenty or thirty miles which we are well acquainted with, and have frequently traced, seem short and inconsiderable ; but the same length of Journey in an unknown Way, seems very tedious and formidable to us. Thus I think it is in the Case you have propounded ; but now, if you please, let us pass on where we were going.

I say then, suppose the term of our lives be estimated at the duration of about seventy years,

A Practical Demonstration of the littleness of our spare time.

yet in the first place we must subtract from this Summ a very considerable part, as taken up in Childhood and Youth, and which slips away we know not how, so as to escape our observation, being wholly spent in folly and impertinency, but certainly lost to all manly purposes : to which if you add the infirmities of Old Age, which (though it do not equally

equally in all men, yet) always more or less renders some part of our time useless; you will think it no unreasonable *Postulatum* if I suppose that both together take up a third part of the whole.

Then in the next place let us consider how great a proportion is taken up in sleep, in eating and drinking, in dressing and undressing, in trimming and adorning, and, to be short, in the mere necessities of the Body. I have read of a brave Saxon Prince of this our Native Country, who allowed only eight hours in the Day, or one third part of his time, to these uses; but I doubt few mean men follow his example: and if we take measures from common experience, we shall find that these meaner Offices take up near, if not altogether half the time of most persons. And so another third of the whole is gone, and only one poor third remaining for all other occasions.

Then again, out of that remainder a very great share will be challenged by necessary business, the affairs of our Estate or Calling, and the concerns of our Families; and these occasions are so importunate that they will not be denied without culpable Ill-Husbandry, nor gratified without a large proportion of the aforesaid remainder.

Moreover, whether we will or no, another part will be ravished from us by Sickness and Physick, in Civility and Complement, in visiting and being visited, in Journeys and News, and a thousand impertinences; so that he must be a very good and wary Husband indeed that suffers not great expences this way.

And after all this, here is nothing for reading
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ing and study, for meditation and the improvements of our own minds, nay, not for Religion and Devotion towards God, and the unspeakable Concerns of another World, which in all reason may most justly put in for their shares.

Phil. All this is very true; but what do you infer from this Account?

Sebast. I dare trust your judgment to make Inferences from the Premises: For in the first place I know you cannot fail to observe, and that with a just indignation, that the lightest matters of our Life have the greatest share of our time spent in them: folly and infirmity, infancy and dotage, take up the greatest room of all: then worldly business and pleasure exhaust the most of that which is left, and the Mind and noblest interests have least of all left for them.

And then secondly, you cannot but note with admiration how very little share God Almighty hath even from the very best of men. And you cannot but adore his Goodness which rewards with Eternal Life that little time in which men work in his Vineyard; for whether men come in at the eleventh hour or sooner, it is too plain that scarcely an eleventh part of our time is spent in his service. But that which I aim at in this Calculation is to demonstrate to you, that there is a great deal more reason that men should endeavour rather to redeem time from lesser occasions than to lavish it in impertinences, that so our weightier Concerns may have the more tolerable allowances: And to be sure he must be a very soft and feeble man, that, after all these ends

are served, can complain that time lies upon his hands, which was the thing to be proved.

Phil. I am now amazed at my own stupidity that could think fit to put such a case to you. Lord! what vain Fools are we, that complain of plenty when we are rather straitned and in want? What silly Prodigals we are, that are so far from sparing betimes, that we are not so much as frugal, when all these claims and demands come in so thick upon us? I have often heard it said, that by keeping a strict account of Incomes and Expences, a man might easily preserve an Estate from dilapidation, but I now perceive that for want of a little of your Arithmetick *to number our days*, we run out our Lease of Life before we are aware; and phansying we have enough to squander away upon every trifle, we have ordinarily little or nothing left to defray the most weighty occasions.

And, with your pardon, let me tell you, I think now I have found where the Shoo pinches: It is not (I perceive now) a surplusage of time that tempts us to seek out those diversions aforesaid; but the mere vanity of our mind, which hath a fondness for them: and then Custom and Example have made them so natural and almost necessary to us that we think the time long till we are at them. Not that we have much to spare, for God knows we have little enough; but because we think much of all that which is otherwise employed. And this I doubt is the true reason why we are impatient of long Prayers, and offended with a long Sermon; which whoso observes would perhaps charitably suppose,

pose, that the urgency of business would not permit us to attend them; but we utterly deprive our selves of that pretence when we complain that time lyes upon our hands. To speak truth therefore and shame the Devil and our selves too, We can hardly spare time for God, because we love him too little: but we have abundance of spare time for our idle diversions, only because we love them too much.

Innocent and pleasant employments of Time. *Sebast.* Dear *Phil.* You have hit the very Mark: But let us go on, and suppose, that our spare time were more than it is or possibly can be

(upon the premises) yet it will be no hard matter to find out more pleasant, as well as more innocent entertainments of it than those now in request.

For in the first place, there are some employments every whit as delightful as recreations themselves; such as in particular, Planting, and Gardening, in which a man may not only have the pleasure to contemplate the admirable beauty and variety of the Works of God, but by improving the nature of Plants, by altering the species, by mixture and composition of several beauties and perfections into one, by deducing one out of another, exalting one by another, and in a word by giving being and continuance to several things, he becomes a kind of Creator himself, if I may without offence use such an expression. This kind of business ministers so many and so ravishing delights, that I remember *Cato* preferred it before all the pleasure of Youth, and thought the entertainment of his elder years herein a good exchange for the voluptuousness of younger years, which he had
now

now lost all use and apprehension of; nay, I think *Æpicurus* himself placed a good part of his felicity in the delights of his Garden. And above all I am certain that God Almighty who knew best what satisfactions were to be found within the whole sphere of his Creation, and was not invidious or niggardly towards men, made choice of this for the entertainment of our first Parents in their state of innocency, and before their folly and sin had damned them to care and toil, and to the sweat of their Brows.

Again, There are some Exercises and Recreations both of Body and Mind, which are very ingenious as well as divertive, such as Singing, Musick, Painting, and the like; in which a man rather puts a pleasant deception upon himself in point of time, than wholly loses it. And they are so far from debauching his mind or raising his passions, that they only exalt a mans phancy, but otherwise compose his temper even to admiration.

And if you will promise not to laugh at my peculiar humour, I will refer another Instance to this Head, and tell you, That methinks the playing with a pretty humour'd Child of three or four years old, or more or less, is scarcely inferior in delightfulness to any of the former; where you shall observe innocency of mind, benignity of temper, sweet and gentle passions, ease and unforced mirth, unfeigned love, pretty endearments of affection, pleasant endeavours to speak and express it self, little dawnings of reason and phancy, and innumerable other things, which a man can feel rather than express. I called this my peculiar phancy, but I do not know why it should be peculiar to me;

I suppose it may be more general, however I confels to you I am much the better pleased with it, because I find in the Gospel that our Saviour himself was not displeased with it.

Besides all these, there are some Offices of humanity and charity which afford a man unspeakable delight in the discharge of them; such as comforting a Friend or Neighbour in his affliction, or assisting and counselling him in his difficulties, promoting Peace and making an end of Controversies, relieving a poor man in his hunger, &c. In all which, besides the satisfaction a man hath in his own mind upon consideration that he hath done well and worthily, he is also sensible of a reaction, and as it were by reflection participates of the pleasure those persons find by his good Offices towards them. For to say nothing of any of the other, what a refreshment is it to our own bowels, to observe the Appetite and Gusto with which a poor hungry man feeds upon that which you charitably supply him with. And it will do a mans heart good to take notice of the strange change wrought in such a person by a bountiful entertainment, his countenance more cheerful, his spirits brisk, his heart light, his whole temper more sweet and ingenuous; all which who can be accessary to without a kind of vertuous Epicurism?

All these which I have named are sincere and manly pleasures, without noise and without danger, which neither raise a mans passions nor drown his reason; they are neither so fine and spiritual that the Body can have no participation of them, nor so gross and feculent that the mind should be ashamed of them. And in some

or

or other of these every man that pleases may spend his vacant hours with satisfaction.

But let me now go a little higher, and what if we take in somewhat of the other World to sweeten the present Life? What think you, after all, of Prayer to God and reading the Scripture, may not a man bestow some of his time in these with as much pleasure as devotion? and, so (to allude to the Modern Philosophy,) fill up the void spaces of his Life with Celestial matter?

*Of Prayer, and
reading the Scri-
ptures.*

As for the former of them, Prayer, I remember you well observed that several of those men that complain as if they were over-burthened with time, yet love to make as short work with this as they can; wherein they betray either some measure of Atheism in their hearts, or a great deal of sensuality in their affections: and I cannot tell whether they more contradict themselves, or discover their shameful ignorance of the noblest pleasures of Life. For besides that it is highly agreeable to the best reason of a mans mind, that he should do all honour to the Divine Majesty, and daily pay his homage to his greatest Benefactor; and nothing sure can be more delightful than the exercise of our highest powers about their proper Object. And besides that, Prayer is the known way to obtain the Divine Blessing, upon which all the pleasure and comfort of our Lives depend, and never fails of success one way or other.

Besides all this, I say, and abundance of other advantages of it, it is the very pulse of the Soul, which keeps the Spirits florid and vital; It answers to the Motion of the Lungs in

the Body, and exhales those melancholy Vapors that would choke and suffocate our hearts: By it we put our selves under the Divine Protection, and our Spirits are heightened and fortified by the Patronage of so high a Genius, who can secure us against all assaults and dangers whatsoever. When we have commended our selves to the Divine Providence by Prayer, our hearts are at rest; we are secure sleeping and waking; we are never alone, but have always one to second us; whatever the issue and success of our endeavours be, our minds are quieted; if things answer our wishes, we have a double satisfaction, that God Almighty favours us, as well as that our labours are successful; if things miscarry, we impute no folly, nor omission to our selves, we have done all that was fit for us to do, but it pleased Divine Wisdom to disappoint us. Besides, the frequent approach of the Divine Majesty puts a gravity upon a man's countenance, checks and keeps down all exorbitancy of passions, begets an ingenuous modesty, and makes men as well ashamed as afraid to do an unworthy action.

To all which add, that by the advantage of our Prayers we are enabled to become a publick Blessing, and every private man a Benefactor to the whole World; than which thing what can be either greater in it self, or more acceptable to a great and generous mind? Consequently, what can a brave and publick-spirited man employ his time in with more delight, than in that which (whatsoever his Fortunes and external condition be) will make him a Blessing not only to his Friends and Neighbourhood, but to the Country and Times he lives in, that even
Kings

Kings and Princes are really beholden to him. Nor is it necessary that much time be taken up herein to serve all these great ends, nor much less is it my intention to commend affectedly long Prayers, a little time and a great deal of heartiness best doth the business of Religion, and that little so employed will make all the rest pass away the more sweetly and comfortably.

And then for reading and meditating upon the Holy Scripture, the Psalmist hath told us, that the good and blessed mans *delight is in the Law of God*, and that *therein he meditates day and night*. And surely any man may be ab'e to entertain a few moments in it. If curiosity sway with us, there are as admirable things in the Holy Scriptures as the mind of man can desire; if we affect History, we have there the antientest and most faithful Monuments in the World, those, without which all mankind had continued in their Nonage and Childhood to this day, as being so far from able to give an account of the beginning of the World and original of things, that they could not have looked backward many Ages, but they would have been utterly bewildered in Mists and Fables as absurd as the wildest Fictions of Poets. Besides, without this Record all the wonderful Methods of Divine Providence, (which are the assurance and comfort of the present Age, and the obligation to Vertue and Foundation of Piety and Religion) had been buried in oblivion.

If we seek after Knowledge, either natural, moral or prudential, where is there such another Treasury of it to be found as this, where we have not only the Relations and Observations

of the wisest men in all Ages past, but the discoveries of the Divine Majesty, the depths of infinite Wisdom (that knows the true reason of things) laid open.

If we are pleased with the foreknowledge of things to come, (as what man of Soul can chuse but desire to see beyond the Curtain,) then all the Presages, Prognosticks and Divinations, all the most rational inductions of the wisest men, are but silly surmises and idle dreams to the Predictions of the Holy Prophets, which give us light to the Worlds end, and a view of another World; and have both assured their own credit, and warranted our belief of what is yet to come by the well-known accomplishment of their former Predictions.

If we would improve our selves in Vertue, what surer Rule can we have than the express Declarations of God himself? Who can prescribe to him what shall please him, or prescribe to us better than he that made us, and knows what is fit for us to do? And what more full, plain, compendious and higher Institution of Religion can there be than the Holy Scripture?

This brings God near to us, and us near to him; here you know his mind, you see his nature, and hear him speak; here you may stand as it were upon an *Isthmus* or Promontory, and take a view of both Worlds; this is the light of our Eyes, the Rule of our Faith, the Law of our Conscience, and the Foundation of all our Hopes. All this together sure cannot chuse but make the reading of the Scripture become a very serious, and yet a very delightful employment. And now upon the whole matter, what think you, Dear *Phil.* may not a Gentleman

man entertain himself and his time without the relief of Drinking and Gaming?

Phil. What think I, say you? Why, I think worse of my self than ever I did. I do not wonder now at what you said when we first came together, *viz.* That you could always find employment for your Time; but I wonder at my own folly: for I plainly see now that no man can have time to be a burden upon him that hath come honestly by it, I mean, that hath not stollen it from nobler Entertainments to bestow it upon a Debauch.

Sebast. But yet this is not all neither. I perceive I have satisfied you both of the pleasantness of some lighter, but innocent Exercises, which I named in the first place; and also of the great importance of Prayer and reading the Scripture, which I last spoke of: yet as on the one hand I would not have a man employ all his vacant hours on the former, so neither on the other hand do I think he is bound to exhaust them wholly upon the latter: No, *Phil.* our Bodies are compounded of various humors, our Souls consist of several faculties, God is a good and benign Being, and consults the good and comfort of all the Powers he hath created. Besides all the forementioned therefore (and those which I have supposed without naming them particularly) there is a way of entertaining our selves, called Study and Meditation. Study, I say, in general, not confined to any Subject, but only directed to the general end of improving our selves and the time God hath given us in the World.

Of Study and Meditation, the advantages and the difficulties of it.

For why should we abject our selves that have

rational Souls, an active vigorous Intellectual Spirit in us? Is not this able to employ it self, our time and our bodily Spirits too? Is not our mind large enough to embrace the whole World? Can we not bring upon the Theater of our imagination all the occurrences of time past, as well as present. Must we needs only pore upon the things just before our Eyes! Must our understandings lye fallow and barren unless they be continually stirred up by our senses? Are our Souls only given us for Salt to keep the Body sweet, or servilely to cater for our inferior powers, and not rather to subdue and govern them?

Why should not we remember we are men, and improve our best Talent, sharpen the sense of our minds, and enlarge and greaten our Spirits? What hinders but that a man may converse with himself, and never have better Company than when he is most solitary? How can a man want Company that hath an Angelical Nature within him, or need diversion that hath the whole World before him to contemplate?

What should discourage or hinder men from this course? is it the pains and difficulty? Nothing in the World is pleasanter when a man is once used to it: Is it for fear we should exhaust our selves, and like the Spider spin out our own Bowels in our Web? There can be no danger of that, an Immortal Soul never wears out; and if the Body goes by the worst, so long as the Spirit is bettered, there is no loss in all this. O say it should be to no great fruit that we apply our selves to Study, yet at least this is gotten by it, That we employ our time and keep our selves out of harms, which is as much as we now seek for.

Phil.

Phil. It is generally the fault of Eloquent and Contemplative Men to outshoot the Mark they aim at, and whilst they talk finely, to deliver very unpracticable things. Pardon me, Dear *Sebastian*, if I suppose this infirmity hath accompanied those great accomplishments in you, at this time. No doubt but Meditation is a noble entertainment of Time, and questionless he that hath once got the knack of it, nothing in the World is so pleasant to him: but you must consider, there are very few who have so much command over themselves as to hold their minds long steady and intent, and perhaps fewer that have sufficient knowledge to employ their thoughts at home; it requires a great Stock for a man to be able to set up this Trade by himself. Besides, many mens Spleens are so near their Heads, and there is so great affinity between the Animal Spirits and Vapours, that he that goes to exercise the one stirs up the other: and oftentimes the greater the intention of mind is with which a man sets himself to think, the greater Cloud is raised, and the more impossible it will prove for such a man to discern any thing clearly. Your Advice therefore is very good for them that can receive it; but this is no *Catholicon*, no general Receipt.

Sebast. I thank you, Sir, most heartily for the modest and seasonable check you gave to the carriere of my Discourse: I must confess upon second thoughts that all men are not fit for Meditation, and therefore it cannot be their Duty; yet I must tell you withal, I suspect more are unwilling than incapable: and I doubt some are more afraid of awakening their Conscience than stirring their spleen by it. However, I have
another

another Expedient to propound (for the purpose we are upon) which will supply the place of the former, and which, I am sure, can be liable to no Objection; and that is, Conference or Discourse: which when I have recommended to you, I shall have delivered my whole mind.

Of friendly Conference, and the great benefits of it.

God Almighty hath given us Speech to express our selves to one another. We are not left alone in the World so but that every man hath some Friend or Neighbour to hold correspondence with; why should we not then entertain our selves, our Friends and our time in Friendly Communication, without the help of the Bottle, &c. This requires no great intension of mind, no great Stock is required in this Case; this will stir up no Vapours from our Spleen; and by this way we may not only divert our selves, but elucidate our own thoughts, enlarge our experience, resolve one anothers difficulties, and mutually please and profit one another.

And the more effectually to recommend this Expedient to you, I will first take the confidence to affirm, and do not doubt but I shall by and by make it evidently appear, That this is not only a very gentle and creditable way of conversation, but also (if it be rightly practised) a most pleasant and delightful, and (which perhaps may seem the greatest Paradox of all) one of the most healthful Exercises in the World.

The first of these you will easily grant me when you consider, that Discourse is that which principally distinguishes a Wise man from a Fool. For what else do we take our measures of

of one another by? If a Man discourse of weighty matters, and keep close to the Point, and speak sharply in the Case, we account him a worthy man. But contrariwise if he talk flatly, insipidly and impertinently, we have no esteem or reverence for such a Person, let his outward appearance and circumstances be otherwise what they will.

It is certain we cannot know a Mans thoughts or the sense of his mind till he expresses them: A Fool we say is a Wise-man so long as he holds his peace, and a Wise-man differs nothing from a Fool till he speaks. For a mans actions may be by rote or custom or the direction of some other person, but a mans discourse is his own. *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, said our Saviour. The tongue will betray not only the inclinations and passions of the heart, but the very sense and capacity of the mind; and the latter much more than the former, (as the Liquor will carry the tincture of the Vessel.) 'Tis possible indeed for an evil and vicious man to talk vertuously, and a silly man may get into a Road of wise Sayings; but the Lesson he hath conn'd will soon be at an end, and then he will no more be able to hold out at that rate, than a flaw'd Vessel to make the same sound with a good one. Wisdom and folly are widely different in their natures; but it is Discourse that lays them open and makes the distinction conspicuous: why then should not a man by practice endeavour to become expert at that which, if he be master of, will be his Glory, but to be sure will make his Character.

But now for the vulgar methods of Conversation, which commonly consists of Drinking
and

*Drinking and
Gaming are Le-
velling Practices.*

and Gaming, they are no better than Levelling Practices, that observe no distance, nor make any distinction amongst men, the Master and Servant are at *Hail Fellow*, the Gentleman and the Clown are upon the Square with one another, the Man of Parts and Learning and the veriest Idiot and Coxcomb are upon even Ground in those Entertainments.

As for Drinking, I cannot sufficiently wonder at that abjection of mind in Persons of Quality, who, as if they consented to their own degradation, will contend for Victory with their Inferiors at equal Glasses: when it is notorious, that a Porter shall bear more than a Gentleman; and a fine Wit shall be baffled and disordered with that which a thick scull'd dull Sot will carry away well enough, and come off as wise a man as he entred. But suppose the Gentleman should outdo the Clown, and the Witt the Dunce; yet as the Match was made very imprudently, so the Victory would be inglorious.

And then for Gaming, I have heard of an Ape that hath been too hard for his Master at that most ingenious Game of Chess. But I have known one very near to a Natural that hath been a great Master at it. And certainly it is very easie to imagine that in those other Games, which are governed by Chance, the Victory may fall to the less worthy Person. It seems therefore a very mean thing to be eagerly intent upon that to which a Wise man hath no better title than a Fool, and, if we believe the Proverb, much less. To be sure no man can be so vain as to think himself the wiser or better man

man for his Conquest. But now Discourse discriminates mens real abilities, and bears an impartial Testimony to a mans worth, and the Contests of reason are therefore truly honourable, because the wiser man is sure to have the Victory.

But then secondly, For the pleasure and delightfulness of Discourse, it cannot be doubted but that the Higher Powers in a man are attended with the sweetest delights, in the exercise of themselves; and the more strong and vigorous the Constitution of those Powers is, the more quick and ravishing must the sense of their peculiar pleasure consequently be. This the experience of all studious men bears testimony to, amongst whom one Truth sifted out by reason is more pleasant than all the Entertainments of an Epicure. For in Discourse there is a very grateful relish in the mere bandying of Arguments to and fro: Great curiosity in distinguishing, prettiness in an handsomely dress'd probability, surprize in Paradoxes ingeniously maintained; admirable beauty in that strange variety of Colours in which a good Wit will represent things, far beyond the hand and skill of a Painter; all which, with a thousand other Particulars which I pass by, render the pleasure of Discourse as much transcendent to all instances of sensuality as Reason it self is above sense, or a Man superior to a Beast.

And now In the last place for that seeming Paradox concerning the wholesomeness of Discourfing, it is observed that they who are curious of the health of their Bo-

The Pleasures of Discourse.

Discourfing an healthful Exercise.

dies,

dies, to the end that they may invigorate all their powers and faculties, have to that purpose found out appropriate Exercises to all the principal parts: for so they say, walking is peculiarly good for digestion, by gently agitating the Stomach and Bowels; riding is singularly beneficial to the Head; playing at Bowls helps the Reins; and the use of the long Bow, is especially commended for opening the Breast and Lungs, &c. Now I think I may be bold to say, that whatsoever each of these is to its respective part and member, that will smart and vigorous Conference perform to the whole man. For as to the very bodily powers, it warms the Heart and Stomach, dries the Brain, opens the Lungs, quickens the motion of the blood, and brings a fresh and florid Colour into the face and whole habit. And then as for the better part of man, Discourse raises the phancy, exercises the memory, clears the thoughts, enlightens the judgment, and improves the reasoning of the mind. To which add, if you please, that it diverts melancholy, puts off dozing, banishes anxious thoughts and sollicitude, and in a word, holds a man so fully employed, that it leaves no room for the very temptations of the Devil.

And now I appeal to you, judge whether I have performed my promise or no: If I have, then besides all the aforementioned, here is a manly employment of time always at hand, an exercise that every one is capable of that hath a tongue in his head, and a Soul in his body. Thus we may treat our Neighbour, and cost us nothing, but what we (it seems) have too much of, I mean Time. And thus we may profit our
selves,

selves, and oblige him too beyond all other entertainments.

Phil. I have a great reverence for your judgment; but in truth I cannot tell what to say to this Gossipping kind of diversion, and till this moment I never thought lip-labour had been of such value. As for thinking men, the World is content to let them enjoy the reputation of being wise, or at least to suspend their judgment of them till they see the contrary in the unreasonableness of such men in all the instances of gentle and pleasant conversation. But as for talkative men (I need not tell you) they have ever been accounted troublesome and impertinent. And for your own part, Good *Sebastian*, give me leave to say that your practice confutes your Doctrine; for after all this which with great Wit and Eloquence you have spoken in the commendation of discursive conversation; and notwithstanding that every one who knows you, knows your singular dexterity in managing any Subject that falls under Debate in your Company; yet you of all men are generally observed to be the most silent and reserved. It is true at this time you have been disposed to talk very freely with me, (for which I am greatly obliged to you;) but at several other times it is a hard matter to pump any thing out of you.

Sebast. I see plainly that there is a wrong as well as a right Handle to every thing, and a continual proneness in men to mistake one another. Whensoever any Vice is censured or exposed, men presently think the contrary extream to that practice must needs be the Vertue; so whilst I have been recommending ingenuous and friendly Conference, you represent

sent me as if I had made it my design to plead for impertinent talkativeness : which truly I am so far from, that I think the World doth that sort of men no wrong in the censure it passes upon them ; amongst whom (if it be a wise man's Lot to be cast) he will think himself in the Region of Parrots, and for his deliverance be tempted to pray for deafness as a great Blessing. No, *Phil*, no, I would neither have men say all they can, nor much less talk whether they can or no. But I would have them first think to direct their speaking, and then speak, that a judgment may be made of their thoughts : I would that men should bend their minds whenever they relax their tongues, and try the strength of one anothers heads in reasoning rather than in drinking.

But then as for what your self or others have observed of my carriage in Company, I confess the Observation is rightly taken, and I will ingenuously assign you the occasions of it ; which are (as far as I know my self) such as these : In the first place, it sometimes falls out, that the Subject which

*Just occasions of
Taciturnity or Re-
servedness some-
times in Conver-
sation.*

other men are discoursing of, is not very agreeable to my mind ; as in these unquiet times, the common Theme is News ; which as it is usually managed is frequently attended with pragmatism and censure of the Government under which we live, or at least the effect of it is the filling one another with fears and jealousies, and the tormenting a mans self before the time, with his own or other mens dreams and suspicions. Now in this Case I am general'y silent, at least till I can find a fit transition

transition, and have the good luck to turn the stream of Discourse some other way.

Again, sometimes I am in the Company of those who are every way my Betters; and there I think it as much more adviseable to hear than to speak, as it is better to reap than to sow.

Sometimes also I meet with a Company of desultorious Wits, who skip so hastily from one thing to another, that they over-run me; and whilst I am meditating what to say pertinently to the Question in hand, they are gotten into another Subject: A man must ride Post; or be left behind by such Discourfers.

But besides all this, sometimes a mere melancholy humour seizes me; which so benums me, that I am for that Fit altogether usefess in Society. But let that be as it may, or however my practice falls short of my counsel, I am certain my Example is not sufficient to counterbalance the Reasons I have given. Wherefore let me again heartily recommend it to you, not only for its own benefit, but if it were but to supersede and lay aside those other soft and silly diversions which have of late so far usurped upon humane Society, as well nigh wholly to ingross to themselves all mens vacant hours, and a great deal more.

Phil. You have the Ascendant of me, and may perswade me to what you will: But, Good Sir, do not convert me from a Good-Fellow to a prating Fool. If I had been used to study, and been conversant in Books, as you have, I might have been in a capacity to please my self, and perhaps the Company too with Discourse; but for want of that Education, silence will generally be my best discretion.

F.

Sebast.

Sebast. Books, *Phil* ! It is neither Books nor much reading that makes a wise man. How many shrewd men have you known, and very well accomplished in most parts of Conversation, that never had any great matter of Clerkship. And on the other side, amongst the great number of those that have had all the advantages of Bookish Education, how few are those that are really the better for it ! With many men reading is nothing better than a dozing kind of Idleness, and the Book is a mere Opiate that makes them sleep with their Eyes open. 'Tis

Of the use and abuse of Books and Reading.

perversed into an Antidote against thinking wisely, and made a creditable pretence for dissipation of business. Such mens studying is only an artifice to reconcile the ease and voluptuousness of sloth with the reputation of wisdom ; a gentile and wary kind of Epicurism, that surfeits without pain or shame, and in which men spend their time without profit to themselves or usefulness to the World.

Again, there are some with whom Bookishness is a Disease : For by over-much reading they surcharge their minds, and so digest nothing. They stuff themselves so full of other mens Notions, that there is no room for their faculties to display themselves. Such as these after all their reading can no more be accounted learned, than a Beast of burden may that carries a Students Books for him. Only so much Meat is properly nourishment to the Body as a man can macerate and digest, as he can apply to the reparation of his Body, when he can separate the superfluities, and be stronger and lighter after it, more than this breeds ill humors, obstructs

obstructs the passages, and impairs the state of health instead of advancing it; and so much Study only is profitable as will excite a mans thoughts as will afford hints or fallies to the minds, or as will furnish him with matter for meditation and discourse, which two last things are the two great instruments of improving our selves, and therefore are to prescribe the measures of our study and reading.

Wherefore it was well said by a Great Man of our Countrey, That reading indeed might make a full and copious man, but meditation made a profound man, and Discourse a clear, distinct and useful man. For reading at most doth but make a mans mind equal to that of the Author he reads; but meditation sets him upon the shoulders of his Author, by which means he sees farther than he did or could do. Or whereas the one may fill up all the present capacity of a mans mind, the other, *viz.* meditation, stretches and enlarges those capacities. And then for Discourse (which is that we are now speaking of) besides the advantages which it hath in common with meditation, it opens and unfolds a mans thoughts, and so brings his Notions to a Test, and makes proof of the solidity or weakness of his conceptions: by which means, as on the one hand he shall not run away with the shadows of things instead of the substance; so on the other hand, when his apprehensions are sifted, and approved to be right and sound, his mind will be confirmed against wavering, and he will become constant and consistent with himself. I have often observed with equal pleasure and wonder, that by the mere propounding a difficulty to another, I have presently been

able to resolve that which was too hard for me, whilst I revolved it only in my own breast. For by that opening and unfolding of our thoughts we let in light to our own judgments and see clearer than we did before.

Besides, a man is too apt to have a partial fondness to the issue of his own brain; but when he hath brought his conceptions to the impartial Touchstone of other mens judgments, and as it were tried them by the light, he will neither be apt to be upon all occasions over-confident, peremptory and dogmatical; (as you may observe many reserved studious men to be, who when once they give vent to their thoughts, labour under a kind of incontinency of mind, and will be continually dictating and asserting at all adventures) nor on the other side will he stumble at every rub, and stagger at every objection, and so give up the best Cause upon the slightest (but unforeseen) Attack.

And there is one thing more very considerable in this matter; namely, that by Conference a man is accustomed to methodize and digest his thoughts in order; by which means his Notions are not only rendred more beautiful, but are more at hand, and also more perspicuous and fitter for use. Whereas contrariwise, (let a man have read never so much, and meditated too into the bargain) without this expedient all his Notions will lye very odly and confusedly, and come out all in an heap or huddle. In summ, He that uses himself only to Books, is fit for nothing but for a Book; and he that converses with no body, is fit to converse with no body.

Phil. In truth, *Sebastian*, though I am very sensible of my own defects in Point of Learning; yet

yet in that little experience which I have had in the World, I have seen so many instances of the ill use, or rather no use that some men have made of it, that I am not only convinced there is some truth in what you say, but am the better inclined to be content with my own education. I have known some mighty Bookish men like full Vessels without vent, as if they were troubled with the Gripes; their Notions ferment in them, but they cannot utter them either to their own ease or the profit of others. And again, some mens learning hath served only to make them pedantick and troublesome, to make a noise with words and terms of Art every whit as offensive as the clatter of the Tablemen, which you laugh'd at even now. Notwithstanding, by your favour, it cannot be doubted but Learning hath mighty advantages; and I verily think you should speak against your own Conscience if you condemned it in the general: Wherefore you must excuse me if I continue of the opinion, that it is next to impossible, without more of it than I can pretend to, to hold such conversation as you are putting me upon.

Sebast. Excuse me, Dear *Phil.* I do not in the least put any slight upon Learning, or the means of it, Books and Study: I know well it is of admirable use in a wise mans hand, because it gradually and insensibly opens mens minds, and both gives them a quicker sight and affords them a larger prospect. And even on the most ordinary parted men it hath at least this effect, to calm the Spirits, and to sweeten their temper, by subduing the fierceness and ferity of mens constitutions. And therefore I heartily wish, that no Gentleman (especially) were permitted

to attain his State and Fortunes without this qualification. So that all I was saying was only this, that you nor any man of your capacity ought to discourage your selves upon the pretence of your lesser advantages that way; forasmuch as a wise and a good man may (though perhaps not with the same ease) with a very little of it maintain an ingenuous and profitable Conversation.

Phil. Perhaps it may be so as you say: But then certainly a man must have very extraordinary natural abilities to supply that defect.

Sebast. No, *Phil.*, that needs not neither; for Discourse will both supply the want of acquired abilities, and also improve the natural. I suppose you remember the Saying of Solomon, *As Iron sharpeneth Iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend.* I confess I have heard that passage of the Wise man applyed to the visiting and comforting a friend in adversity, which certainly doth mightily buoy up and support a mans Spirits when he finds that he is not altogether forsaken of his Friend, but owned by him in the lowest ebb of his Fortunes. But I think it is every whit as true and applicable to that we are speaking of, as if he had said that the Company and Conversation of a Friend doth as well quicken a mans wits, and improve his understanding, as one Iron Instrument is sharpened by another. For as I said before, Conference and Discourse gives us the advantage of whatsoever he (we converse with) hath read or thought upon that Subject, and so we reap the benefit of his reading, and of his meditations too. And then be-

Conversation improves a man more than Books and Study.

sides

sides that, we exercise our own judgment upon the matter so digested and prepared for us, the very presence and attention of our friend sharpens the attention of our minds, his Question prevents our extravagancy and wandring, and keeps us in a method, and his expectation from us holds our thoughts close and steady to the Point in Debate. By all which not only the Stock of our Knowledge is improved, but the Patrimony also; I mean, the very powers of the Soul. In consideration of all which that Great Man of our Country, whom I cited but now, doth not stick to pronounce, That if it should be a mans hard fortune to have no body to converse withal, it were better he should talk to a Post than not open his mind at all.

Phil. There you nickt it, *Sebastian*; by that last word (whoever was the Author of it) I perceive a Wise man may make some use of such a Tool as I am, if it be but to reflect and Echo back his own thoughts upon himself. But in earnest, Sir, now that you have encourag'd me, I begin to think something better of my self, and am resolved to try what may be done in the way you recommend. But what would you have a man discourse about? I am afraid, if there be not some care in the choice of a Subject, all will degenerate into Gossiping and impertinent Chat.

Sebast. There is no need of sollicitude in that Particular, forasmuch as any, even the most obvious and occasional Subject, will enable us to attain the end we aim at, provided it be followed home; I mean, talk of what matter you will, if so be you do not talk flatly and carelessly about it, but set your thoughts on work and

they will bring forth both pleasure and profit. For the mere exercise of our minds improves them as well as that of the body doth the state of bodily health; and whilst our thoughts are intent, though we are not sensible how time slips away, yet we shall be sensible in the conclusion that we have not quite lost it.

Besides, you have observed Musicians to make the most curious descant upon the plainest ground, and have seen several of the Indian Manufactures, where the most exquisite Art hath been bestowed upon the meanest materials: 'Tis not therefore the Theme, but the prosecution of it that is considerable; for, as I said, let that be what it will, if you pursue it with a Train of thoughts, and especially if you be vigilant to take notice of, and apprehend those hints that will thence be occasionally started, you shall quickly be amazed to find your self led before you were aware into some spacious and beautiful Field of Contemplation, wherein you may at once both lose and refresh your self.

Notwithstanding, I acknowledge to you, that the pitching upon some good and useful Subject at first is both the shortest and the surest way to attain our end. For the very importance and concern of a weighty affair naturally rowzes up our minds, and collects and fixes our loose and scattered thoughts; as you shall seldom see any man drowsy and inattentive whilst a matter of consequence to his Life or Credit or Fortunes is in agitation.

Therefore that having thus prepared you to it, I may now speak a great truth to you, and that you may effectually shake off all the fooleries

ries in fashion, and make conversation profitable. And if indeed you would awaken your senses, and improve your self and your time together, let me above all things in the World commend to you Religious Communication, talk of the Concerns of a Soul, and of another World. This is a Subject of that weight and moment, that it cannot fail either to make you intent, or the Company you shall be in grave and serious; and it is withal so vast and large, that you can never fear to be run on ground; for it will always afford you fresh matter of Discourse.

*Discourse about
religious matters
recommended.*

Phil. 'Tis true the Subject is copious enough, and I may be sure to have it all to my self, because no Body will talk with me about it. Who is there now adays that troubles his head with Religion, or especially makes it any part of Conversation. If perhaps any mention of it fall in by the bye, it is presently let fall again, as if it were too hot for mens Fingers, and at most it is made but a kind of Parenthesis, which may be kept in, or left out of the Discourse without interruption of the sense. You have found me out a Subject indeed, but now you must seek me out Company too to treat upon it. For as the World now is, this will seem so irksom a business, that no time will be so tedious as that which is spent upon it, and so we have lost the whole design we were levelling at.

Sebast. Who (say you) will discourse of Religion? Why, every Body sure that thinks of it: for it is a matter that comes so home and close to every man, that he must be a stark Sot, and destitute of the common sense and discretion

discretion of a man, that is not mightily affected with it.

For tell me, is there any man so absurdly vain as to think he shall not die? Can any man that observes the frail contexture of his Body, and the innumerable accidents he is subject to, think himself immortal? Or can he overlook the common condition of mankind, and when he sees men daily drop away and dye in their full strength, and in spite of all helps and advantages of preservation; yet be so fond as to imagine he shall escape the common lot? And seeing what happens to another man to day, may befall himself to morrow; or however, he is certain that he cannot be of any long continuance in this World; who, I say, that is sensible of this can chuse but pry beyond the Curtain, and bethink himself what shall come after.

Is it not the very temper and constitution of our minds to be inquisitive of the future? Is it not a great part of our Prerogative above Beasts, that whereas they are wholly taken up with what's present to them, and neither mind what is past nor to come; we by the largeness of our Souls embrace both, and do we not worthily count him an Ideot that is so short-sighted as not to see beyond his Nose end.

Doth not every Wise man provide for what may be, and do not even the most cold and incredulous suspect at least there may some thing concern us after the present life; and is there any man that can, if he would never so fain, quite rid his thoughts of it? Sure therefore every man that thinks he shall dye, (that is every man that lives) thinks something of Religion, if it
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The importance of Religion.

be but for fear of the Worst. Perhaps you will say there are some men, who though they know they shall die, yet think they shall dye as the Beasts dye, and have no concern hereafter : but are they worthy to be accounted men that can phansie such a thing ? A Beast indeed hath life and sense and motion, and participates of some kind of phancy and memory : but doth it understand a Discourse, or weigh an Argument ? Is it able to infer from Premises, to remember things gone and past, and recal them to mind at pleasure ? Can it compare things together, gather the result, distinguish or pass a judgment upon appearances ? will any man be so ridiculous as to say, Beasts are conscientious too, that they reflect upon their own actions, and accuse or excuse themselves accordingly ? or have they free will to determine their elections which way they please, even against the interest of their senses ? Now he that considers all these vast differences, will, if he have the reason of a man, conclude it very improbable that a Creature of this admirable make should be only designed to be a Pageant for a day, and be totally dissolved at the date of this short life ; especially if he consider withal that these powers and capacities which we have shewn man to be indued with, do not only put him upon the thoughts and expectations and desires of another state ; but do render him marvellously fit for it, and capable of it ; insomuch that several of the noblest of these endowments are wholly in vain, if there be no such thing, and that a Man died as the Beasts do.

Besides all this, doth not every man that hath Eyes in his head to observe the admirable structure

cture of the World, conclude that it must be the Workmanship of a God, and he a great, a wise, a good and a just Being; and can he think so, and not resolve there must be a great necessity of, and reality in Religion: that is, in the reverend observance of that Great Majesty that deserves it, and who hath both made us capable of performing it to him, and obliged us thereunto.

Now if all, or but any part of this be true, who is so mad as to have no concern for this God, Religion and another World? and who is there that having any concern for them, can chuse but think fit to make it some part of his business, the employment of some part of his time, and the Subject of his most serious debates? Hath any man a most important Cause *sub Judice*, and his Tryal drawing on, and doth he never think of it, or discourse his Case with his Friends? Hath any man a great Estate in a Foreign Countrey, or a huge Patrimony in reversion, and never speaks of it? Hath any man either a considerable Friend or a formidable Enemy, and never expresses himself concerning the one or the other? Surely therefore seeing Religion imports all these Concernments, a man may find those that will discourse with him on the Point.

Phil. I readily consent to you, that the business of Religion is a most serious Affair, and worthy of the greatest consideration; but besides (as I have said) there are very few will correspond with a man in discourse about it: To tell you truly, I am somewhat of opinion that it is not fit for that kind of treatment. As it is a sacred, so it is a secret thing, transacted only between God and a man's own Conscience,

science, and therefore is rather the Theme of a man's thoughts, the solitary employment of his own heart, and so fit to be kept up in the Closet of his Breast, and not so proper matter for Discourse.

Sebast. And I as readily yield to you, Dear *Phil*, that the soul and spirit of Religion is very retired and inward, and so inaccessible to other men, that they can neither see it, nor judge of it. But though the first source and springs of it lye very deep, yet why the streams of it should

Religion rests not in the mind only.

not issue forth both in words and actions I cannot comprehend. I have read of a sort of men about the Apostolick times called Gnosticks, who gave out that it was sufficient to retain an inward belief and a right sense of Christian Religion in their minds and hearts, although they neither made profession of the Faith with their mouths, nor practised the Laws of it in their Lives and Conversations. This I look upon as an hypocritical artifice of theirs, to the end that they might make a saving Bargain of Christianity; a device to sleep in a whole skin, and neither run any hazards, nor put themselves to any difficulties for Conscience sake; and if they got nothing by Christ Jesus, they thought they would be sure to lose nothing by him. But as I am very confident a man of your sincerity can harbour none of their designs, so I assure my self what you have said is not upon their Principles: Yet I must tell you, when the Apostle levell'd a blow at them he reach'd your phancy also: for he saith expressly, *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.*

Phil.

Phil. O pardon me, Sir, I make no Question but that when a man is called to make profession of his Faith, and to discover what Religion he is of, then to dissemble is to betray it, and to be silent on such a critical occasion is to revolt and apostatize from it; and in that sense (I take it) another Apostle hath required us, *To render to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us, &c.* As if he had said, Be not ashamed of your Perswasion, but owne and defend your Religion, at the greatest and most adverse Tribunals where-ever it shall be impeached. But this is not the Case: We are not now speaking of what must be done upon an authoritative inquisition into our Consciences, or in times of persecution; but what is to be done in times of peace, and in common conversation; and then and there I am still of opinion, that at least it is not an expresse Duty to talk of Religion.

Sebast. Nor do I differ from you therein. For I do not assert it as an universal Duty to make Religion the matter of our Discourse: But my meaning is, that it will exceedingly become us to do so sometimes. And I verily assure my self, that he that hath a quick sense of God upon his mind, will have favourable expressions of him sometimes upon ordinary occasions (if a foolish modesty do not too much overcome him) as well as witness a good confession in times of persecution. For as our Saviour said, (in the passage I mentioned before) *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* And it seems to me more easily conceivable, that there should be a great fire without any smoke, or a great light without any heat, than that such a man

man as is inwardly principled with the fear and love of God should be wholly tongue-tyed, or be either able or willing altogether to stifle and suppress his sentiments. *Can a man carry fire in his bosom* (said the Wise man) *and not be burnt?* Such an holy fervour as I speak of will assuredly both seek and find a vent for it self, and break out upon all fitting occasions in reverend and affectionate expressions; by which means a man in the first place eases his own breast, and besides, thus this holy fire not only preserves it self from extinction, but propagates it self also, warming and inflaming others.

You have heard, I suppose, of an odd Superstition among the Jews, who out of a pretended reverence of the name of God, and to preserve it from prophanation (as they supposed) so long forbad the common pronuntiation of it, till at length by the intermission of using it they had quite forgotten how to pronounce it. And thus I am afraid it would fare with Religion, if men should (out of I know not what conceit) forbear all Discourse of God and another World, the result would be, that in time both would be forgotten. Nor is it (as you seem to imagine) only times of persecution that ought to rowse up our Spirits, and call for expressions of our zeal; for the Road of business, the successively flowing Tide of variety of entertainments in this World, the soft Charms of pleasant recreations, the blandishments of continual prosperity, and the rust upon our minds contracted by lying still in ease and security, do more endanger

Religious Discourse as necessary in times of prosperity as of persecution.

danger the state of Religion than those trying times you speak of. And therefore Atheism is well known to be a Weed that thrives most in the best Weather. The Seed that was sown upon stony ground fell away when the hot Sun scorched it, because it had no depth of Earth; but that which was sown among the Thorns was choaked too, though the Soil was never so good; in a word, Stormy Weather in the Church may tempt men to be false and treacherous and Renegadoes, but I believe it never made an Atheist; that and prophaneness are the ill fruit of prosperity. So that you see there is need that the Spirit of Piety should exert it self as well in the one season as in the other.

Neither will the publicly stated times or forms and exercises of Religion sufficiently secure it against this danger, without such voluntary efforts and sallies of it as we are speaking of: For in regard God is not to be seen, and the World is before us: the World to come is at distance, and the present World at hand: ill examples are numerous, and good ones few and rare: and in a word, we dwell in so cold a Region, that we had need not only to use a great deal of exercise, but frequently to rub up one another. Therefore as *Socrates* is said to have brought down Philosophy (*è Cælo in urbes*) from speculation to practice, from high Notions to the common Affairs of Life; so it seems necessary to us not only to be religious at Church, and devout in our Closets, but to allow it a share in our daily and ordinary converse.

Phil. Nay, if you be for that, what think you of a demure sort of people amongst us, that as if their tongues were tipt with Religion will
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be always canting in a Scripture-phrase. These men seem to think it prophane to speak intelligibly and in the common language, and account a Jewish kind of Gibberish to be the peculiar *Shibboleth* of the Godly party; And some of them arrive at such a pitch either of hypocrisie or melancholy, (I am loth to pronounce whether) that (upon the matter) they allow no other Discourse to be lawful but what hath a tincture of Religion. Now for my part I look upon these people as very absurd and ridiculous, and therefore I hope you do not intend to give them countenance in what you are saying.

Sebast. So far from it, *Phil*, that I account the former of the two sorts of men, which you speak of, to be no better than a Generation of nauseous Pharisees, forasmuch as nothing betrays Hypocrisie so much as over-doing, and by that course of theirs they render Religion loathsome and ridiculous, and tempt men to think it all Trick and Cheat. And for the other, they seem to be a pitiable, but crack-brain'd sort of men, who render Religion very uncomfortable to themselves, and indeed impracticable and impossible. God knows we are not Angels but men, and have concerns for the present World as well as for the other; and consequently it can be no fault, but a just Duty, to take care of them, and in order thereto to deliberate, to take advice, and to discourse about them.

And this I am so confident of, that I verily believe, the Apostle when he forbids *that any corrupt communication should proceed out of our mouths*, and enjoins *that it be such as is good to the use of edifying*, intended we should interpret the lat-

ter expression by the former, *viz.* that instead of rotten and filthy talk we should tend so earnestly to the contrary, that we might turn the stream of mens Discourse to that which is virtuous and profitable. And when he adds, *That it may minister grace to the hearers*, I think he requires that very thing which I have been recommending to you, namely, that we should take all fair opportunities of bringing Religion into Plea, and of suggesting good Meditations to one another. But I can by no means think he restrains all communication to that Subject, provided that which is about other matter be

*Common Discourse
lawful.*

not lewd or foolish, but favourable and ingenious, useful and pertinent. And this I am the more confirmed in by another passage of the same Apostle, where he directs that *our speech be seasoned with grace as with salt*. Which, as I understand it, imports as if he said, that our most common conversation should have some relish of our Religion; not be wholly religious, no more than our meat should be all salt, but seasoned with it.

Moreover, when our Saviour forewarns us, *that for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account at the day of judgment*, I can by no means think his meaning was that every word that hath not immediate relation to Religion should be accounted idle, and as such incur damnation. Far be such an Interpretation from the merciful and condescending Laws of our Saviour: if this were so, Christianity was a most anxious thing, and the lives of men must be perpetually vexed with scrupulosity. But I take it, he intended only to represent to us, that
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the Judgment to come shall be very exact and particular, so as to take notice not only of our actions, and the greater passages of our lives, but that our very words also shall come into estimate and consideration.

You see therefore I am so far from countenancing either an hypocritical Cant, or a superstitious Melancholy, that I do not think Religion ought importunately to thrust it self into conversation to the exclusion of every thing besides it self; but that it have place in our Debates, and where there is room for choice, there it is my opinion that we give it also the precedence.

Phil. Well, so far we are agreed: But I pray give me leave to go a little further with you. What kind of Religious Conference is it you would be at? Would you have men enter into Disputes about Divine matters? This I the rather ask, because there is another sort of men (besides those we now spoke of) who seem to be mighty zealous of Religion;

Of Disputes in Religion, the vanity and mischiefs of them.

but their heat breaks out wholly this way, and they fill the place wherever they are with noise and clamour, with dust and smoak: Nothing can be said in their presence, but instantly a Controversie is started, the Cudgels are taken up, and to it they go: Scarcely any Body is Orthodox enough for them; for they spin so fine a Thred, and have such Cobweb-Divinity, that the least brush against it is not to be endured: and yet withal they are as positive and decretal in their assertions, that the Pope himself is no body to them. One would think they were Privy-Counsellors of Heaven, they define with so great confidence

what will and what will not please God, and damn to the Pit of Hell all that come not up exactly to their definitions and determinations. These, I assure you, are men that bear a great port in the World, therefore I would fain know your opinion of them.

Sebast. Truly, *Phil*, I have no opinion of them at all: I phansie neither their Faith nor their Charity; the one I account to be a great deal too big, and the other as much too little.

Phil. Agreed again. And now I'll tell you my thoughts a little more fully on this Point: I have always lookt upon this Disputative Religiousness, as no better than a new-fashioned Knight-Errantry, which puts men continually upon quest of Adventures and makes Monsters of every Wind-mill that comes in their way. For these men, if there do but happen to be an inconsiderate expression let fall by any body, presently raise such a tragedy upon it, as if Faith consisted wholly of Punctilio's, (or, as if you should say, a Line was made up of Points,) and that every petty opinion were of moment enough to overturn the World. The contrary whereof I take to be so true that I suspect whether that be of any moment in Religion which admits of Dispute; for methinks it is not agreeable to the goodness of God to suffer any thing of that universal concern to all men to remain very obscure and controversial. I should think therefore this knotty kind of Timber never fit for edification. In plain truth (if you will pardon a rude Similitude) I phansie these great Masters of Dispute to be like the ordinary Professors of Rat-Catching, who commonly draw more Vermine to the place than they destroy;

so these raise more Controversies than they can decide, start more Difficulties than they can afford; and so beget Schisms, gratify pride, inflame differences, and foment heart-burnings amongst men, that might otherwise live peaceably together here, and for ought I know go to Heaven hereafter.

Sebast. Most ingeniously spoken, Dear *Phil*, and according to my very heart. If I thought I could match your Wit I would add, That whenever I see a Knot of these Disputants together, it puts me in mind of a Story or Fable, which you will, of a Company of Apes that had gotten a Glowworm amongst them, upon which they heaped Sticks and other little combustible matter, and laying their heads together blow with all their might, as hoping to make some strange improvement of that little shining Particle. But when they have done all they can, are neither able to encrease the light, nor much less to warm themselves by it. So these busie disputing Wits, after all their blustering, neither bring any useful truth to light, nor warm their own or other mens breasts with any spark of true Piety or Charity; but contrariwise frequently obscure the one, and extinguish the other.

It is not therefore disputing in Religion that I would provoke you to; but the improvement of the indisputable Rules of it, *viz.* to make yourself and those you converse with, sensible of the vital Principles and Powers of Christianity, not to chase one another into a passion, but to rub up one anothers Sentiments, and mutually to warm one anothers hearts with Devotion. By wise and affectionate applications to beget an

equal fervour of Spirit. And in a word, that when Friends are met together they should, like Flint and Steel, raise both light and heat by their mutual and amicable Collisions.

And why, I pray you, Dear *Phil*, should not Religion have its turn in our Conversation? What reason can be given that pious men should not discourse as freely and favourily of holy things, as they or other men concerning common affairs? Why should our lesser Concerns for this World, our secular business, be the only Subject of our Communication? Why, when some talk of their Trades, their pleasures and of News, and the like, should not we talk of our Callings as we are Christians, of the interests of our Souls, and the hopes in another World? Why may not we Discourse of our Heavenly Countrey, whither we are going, as well as other men busie themselves about Foreign Countries, which perhaps they never saw, nor ever shall be concerned in?

You your self acknowledge Religion to deserve the most serious and attentive Consideration of our minds, and upon the same account (if you be consistent with your self) you will be induced to believe it the most worthy and commendable Subject of Discourse, as having all those advantages that can recommend any Subject to the Debate of ingenious men, as it were easie to make appear if it were necessary.

Phil. Sir, I value your judgment, but must make use of my own; if therefore it be not too troublesome to you, let me entreat you to make out that more fully to me, and then I promise you I will either comply with the reasons you give,

give, or will shew you mine to the contrary.

Sebast. With all my heart, Sir; and to do it with as much brevity as may be: I will desire you to consider in the first place whether this Subject, Religion, doth not contain in it the most noble and excellent Points of enquiry, and consequently be not the most worthy, not only to take up the affections, but to exercise the wits of men upon. Such as for instance, about the Nature and Attributes of God, the wisdom of that Providence that manages

Religion the noblest Subject of Discourse.

and governs the World, the nature of Spirits, and particularly of the Soul of Man, of Conscience and Freedom of Will, of the Nature and Obligation of Laws, of the grounds of Faith and the efficacy of it, of the nature and success of Repentance, of Redemption and the way of propitiating God to man, of the Judgment to come, the Resurrection of the Body, and Eternal Life, with abundance more of the like nature; Points all vastly great and copious, profound and difficult, yet equally necessary and discoverable: such as are able to stir up and provoke the greatest capacities, and yet invite and encourage the meanest; in a word, such things, as that there is nothing else within the whole Sphere of Knowledge, that either requires or deserves such serious Debates.

Now how trivial and childish a thing were it whilst we have all these wise and concerning matters to treat of, to be taken up only with Dogs and Horses, with Drinks and Sawces, with Fashions and News (as is too commonly the practice.)

And if you will please to consider well the

aforesaid Particulars, and especially if you make tryal of the course I am advising you, you will find these Subjects to be every whit as pleasant and delightful as they are necessary and important. For what can be imagined

*Pleasantness of
religious Confe-
rence.*

able to minister more delight than the lively representation of another World and Eternal Life, when men modestly reason together, and endeavour to affect one anothers hearts with the certainty and unspeakable felicity of living for ever? of the ravishing contentment of enjoying everlasting Friendship? of being out of the reach of Fate or Chance, out of the Sphere of Mortality, Sicknes and pain, care and vexation? of being exempted from all weakness, filiness, passion and infirmity? of being exalted above all temptation, and secured against all possibility of Apostasie? If Discourse of this nature doth not affect a man beyond all other, it must be because either he hath not the sense of a man, or not the Faith of a Christian.

Or suppose men should take a Subject somewhat lower, and confer together about the Providence of God that governs the present World. What a beautiful thing is it to observe all the variety of second causes to move in a just order under the first, toward certain and uniform ends; the Glory of God and good of men! And that though the Divine Wisdom may lose and confound us in that admirable maze it seems to make, yet there is nothing defective or redundant in the whole World, no room for Chance, nothing unforeseen, no cross accident that hinders the projection, the same design is all along carried on, and at last certainly

tainly attained: But especially if we confine our Contemplations of Divine Providence to that more peculiar Object of it, his Church, it will become yet more visible and more comfortable; where if we wisely confer times past with the present, and view the whole process, we shall find that even Schisms, Heresies, Persecutions and the greatest calamities of the Church tend to its advantage in Conclusion. But above all, that which comes nearest to a man, and must needs affect him most in the affair of Providence, is that thereby he finds himself under the protection of a mighty Being, that nothing befalls him without the consent of his Great Patron, that he is not left to himself to scuffle with ill Fortune and second Causes as well as he can; but he is the charge of God Almighty, the Favourite of Heaven: This certainly is highly pleasant and satisfactory above any thing in this World.

Or if we go lower yet, and make the Subject of our Discourse to be about Peace of Conscience, of the bravery of a Victory over a man's passions or temptations, of the unspeakable comfort and satisfaction in doing good; any of these will afford us an entertainment beyond the flavor of Wine, or the odd variety of Chance in a Game, and indeed (to speak to the Point) above all other Subjects of Discourse and Conversation. And although it be true that there is none of these but a man may contemplate with great satisfaction by himself alone, and in solitude; yet as all social Exercises of the Body are more refreshing than those that are solitary, so it is here, the comfort that results from these Contemplations is doubled and multiplied by reflection

reflection in friendly Conferences. And all this together shall be my first Argument by which I recommend Discourse of Religion; what think you of this, *Philander*?

Phil. I think very well of it: But, I pray you, let me hear out the whole Cause, and then I'll give my Answer.

Sebast. Why, then my second Plea for religious Discourse, is from the consideration that it is far the most safe, prudent and inoffensive matter of Communication, and that in several

Religious Discourse the most prudent. respects: In the first place it kindles no Coals, stirs up no strife, inflames no Bodies choler, and touches upon no mans interest or reputation.

You cannot talk of your self without vanity or envy; you can hardly talk of your Neighbours without some suspicious reflection; nor of those that are farthest off, but you are in danger that some Body present may be concerned for them, as being of their Family or Acquaintance: It is very difficult to talk of News, but you will make your self of some Party or other, and of Opinions without giving offence where you did not intend it; and you can scarcely speak of your Governours and Superiours, so as to avoid all imputation either of flattery or pragmatcalness. But here you may talk securely, and have this assurance, That if you profit no Body, you shall hurt no Body; if you do not benefit others, you shall not prejudice your self. And then in the second place, and in consequence of the former, this kind of Discourse will invite no Eves-Droppers to listen and carry Tales of what passed amongst Friends in their Families and Privacies. For
although

although there be hardly any place so inaccessible; nor any retirement so sacred and inviolable as to be a sufficient Sanctuary against this pestilent sort of Vermin; yet besides that matters of Religion afford them the least hold or handle; the discoursing gravely of it is the most effectual charm in the World to lay them, so that they shall either not be able, or not be willing to misreport you. To which add in the third place, That this Course is one of the most effectual and unexceptionable ways of ridding our selves of the Company of impertinent people, which I reckon no small advantage of this kind of Conversation. For this grave and serious way will certainly either make them better, or make them weary of our Company; that is, we shall either gain them, or gain our time from them; the least of which two is very desirable, and this is the effect of my second Plea for pious Discourse.

I will trouble you but with one more, and that is from the Gentileness of this way of Conversation; it is the most humane, civil and obliging way of treating men, and therefore most becoming a Gentleman. We account it some degree of rudeness to talk French or Latine, or any other Language, which the Company in which we are do not understand; for it looks as if we were either jealous of them, and therefore would not have them know what we say to others; or else it is as if we had a mind to upbraid their ignorance who cannot correspond with us in such a tongue. And methinks as it is usually accounted a Piece of Pedantry, and an Argument of defect of generous

Religious Communication Gentile.

nerous Education, for a Student to quote his Authors, to talk in Scholastick Phrase, and to vent his Metaphysical Notions in the Company of Gentlemen; so neither is it very decorous and civil on the other side to be talking altogether in the peculiar Phrase of Faulconry and Hunting in the Company of a Student: and it favours either of great defect (of other matter of Discourse) in our selves, or of great contempt and insolence towards those others so treated. The Law of Civility is, to be obliging and condescending, to give fair play and scope to all we converse with: Now nothing doth this like to religious Discourse, forasmuch as this being every man's Calling and Concern, there is no man but is or ought to be presumed to be in some measure skilful at it. When we talk of that we talk so as we may all talk, we parly of that which every man's profession and interest obliges him to consider, and which every man's Conscience admonishes him of, and we speak in the true universal Dialect which every man understands.

And this shall be my whole Apology at present for religious Conference: I could say several things more in the Case, but I will do like a wary Advocate, and reserve them to reply to your Objections. And now, Dear *Phil*, what think you upon the whole matter?

Phil. What should I say, or what can I say, but that a good Cause hath happened upon a good Advocate, a Cause able to make an ordinary man Eloquent, and Eloquence able to make a very indifferent Cause passable.

Sebast. Thank you for nothing, *Phil*. Do you think I will be put off with a stale Complement?

plement? I have, I think, demonstrated that religious Discourse is both the most manly and rational, the most pleasant and comfortable, the most prudent and wary, and to all this the most gentle and obliging. Deal now like a Friend and a Gentleman with me; tell me what flaws you have observed in my reasoning, or what Objections you have to what I have said.

Phil. To deal plainly and faithfully with you, and my self too, I think your Reasons are unanswerable; and I have nothing to object, but to what you said in the last place about the Gentleness of this way of Conversation: and that is only this, Methinks you talk in this Particular, as if you came out of a Cloyster, or rather out of another World; for your Discourse is not calculated for the Age we live in: Alas! the World is not at the pass you suppose, you converse with Books, which fill you with fine Speculations; but had you read men as much as I have done, you would find, as I said before, that it would be a very difficult thing to get any body to keep you Company at that rate, notwithstanding all the Arguments you have given or can give for it. You have read (and so have I) of one *Nicodemus*, that came to our Saviour on purpose to confer with him on the business of another World; but it is observed he came by Night, as if he was ashamed of his enterprize; and besides, his Name is upon this occasion (for ought I know) become a by-word and name of reproach to this day. And we have heard of some other persons who in great agonies of mind have been inquisitive into those affairs, and made Religion the principal Theme of their Discourse:

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Sebast. Thank you for nothing, *Phil*. Do you think I will be put off with a stale Complement?

plement? I have, I think, demonstrated that religious Discourse is both the most manly and rational, the most pleasant and comfortable, the most prudent and wary, and to all this the most gentle and obliging. Deal now like a Friend and a Gentleman with me; tell me what flaws you have observed in my reasoning, or what Objections you have to what I have said.

Phil. To deal plainly and faithfully with you, and my self too, I think your Reasons are unanswerable; and I have nothing to object, but to what you said in the last place about the Gentleness of this way of Conversation: and that is only this, Methinks you talk in this Particular, as if you came out of a Cloyster, or rather out of another World; for your Discourse is not calculated for the Age we live in: Alas! the World is not at the pass you suppose, you converse with Books, which fill you with fine Speculations; but had you read men as much as I have done, you would find, as I said before, that it would be a very difficult thing to get any body to keep you Company at that rate, notwithstanding all the Arguments you have given or can give for it. You have read (and so have I) of one *Nicodemus*, that came to our Saviour on purpose to confer with him on the business of another World; but it is observed he came by Night, as if he was ashamed of his enterprize; and besides, his Name is upon this occasion (for ought I know) become a by-word and name of reproach to this day. And we have heard of some other persons who in great agonies of mind have been inquisitive into those affairs, and made Religion the principal Theme of their Discourse:

course: But then was then, and now is now; those men would now be suspected as not well in their wits that affected so antick a Garb: inso-much that even Divines themselves, who for the honour of their Profession, and upon account of the nature of their Office and Studies, may better be allowed to entertain such Discourses; yet (whether it be out of modesty, or deference to the humour of the Age) it is easily observable, that they generally decline the way you recommend, and maintain Conversation at the rate of other men. Judge you therefore whether at this time of Day if a man in health should talk so, he would not be counted an Hypochondriacal Person; or especially if a Gentleman should use it, he would not be wondred at as uncouth and unfashionable.

Nay, that is not the worst of the Case neither: For the now modish way of treating Religion (if by chance it come in the way) is either to find flaws in it, and by Sceptical Sophisms to undermine the very foundations of it, or else by Drollery to burlesque and render it ridiculous. To talk malapertly and scurrilously against it, and now and then to break a Jest upon God Almighty, is an Argument of wit; but to speak gravely and reverently, is dull and tedious beyond measure, the sure sign of a formal Fop or a Phanatick.

Sebast. God forbid! Though I know you understand the World better than I do, because (as you wittily upbraided me) my Conversation is most with the dead; yet I am in good hope you are now mistaken, and that the state of the Living is not so prodigiously bad as you represent

sent it. I know there are a sort of Tap-inspired Debauchées (whose Wit is broached with the Hoghead, and runs on tilt with it) that love to put tricks upon every man and every thing that is graver and wiser than themselves; nor do I so much wonder at it (considering the men) forasmuch as if Religion be true they must expect to be damned; and if it obtain its just veneration they must expect to be the scorn of Mankind. It is not strange therefore if they (consulting their own interest) either undermine it or blaspheme it, that they may have their revenge upon it before hand. But take courage, *Philander*, for these mens tongue is no slander, neither upon due consideration is there more of Wit than of Vertue in their Ribaldry.

As for the more cunning part of them, who will needs be sceptical, and think to give proof that they have more Wit than other men, only because they have less Faith and Modesty; who knows not how easie a thing it is to carp and make Objections? and that a trifling captious Coxcomb can ask more Questions than a Wise man can answer? As any man may pull down faster than another can build up. It is one sign of a good judgment to be able to ask a discreet and pertinent Question, and another to discern what satisfaction is fit to be expected; and then in the third place there is such a Vertue as modesty to sit down and rest satisfied with such an Answer as the nature of the thing will admit of, all which those captious Hypercriticks are destitute of.

And then for the prophane Droll, every man of sense and good manners knows, that
Wit

Wit without Bounds is the very definition of
Of Drollery. scurrility, and that it is an easie
 thing to please a man's self in the
 one if he have no regard to the

other, but will let fly at every thing that comes
 in his way. For my part, I look upon it as e-
 very whit as great an instance of dullness, as of
 impiety, to need so large a scope for Wit as
 these men allow themselves. A good and true
 Wit will find matter enough within the Bounds
 of sobriety, and not think himself straitned
 though he spare God and Religion. The men
 therefore you speak of are like blind *Bayard*,
 bold and dull; and if they now and then hap-
 pen upon something more than ordinary, who
 knows but the Devil may help them to it, who
 is always very ready to assist in this Case?

Therefore, my good Friend, setting both
 these kinds of men aside, who are not the Copy
 but the very scandal of the Age they live in;
 let us consider impartially what else there is a-
 ble to discourage such a way of conversing as we
 are upon. I have made it plain already, that
 all the reason in the World is for it; and it is
 as certain that there are no Laws against it, nor
 doth Authority so much as discountenance it in
 the least. Besides, there is, I am confident, as quick
 a sense of Vertue and piety in the present times,
 as in the best times of our Forefathers. And if
 there be some lewd and profligate men against
 it; yet there are others, and those of the best
 Quality, who think it so far from unbecoming
 their Rank, that nothing is more savoury and
 acceptable to them than pious Discourse. And
 some of these, as I am informed, meet at one a-
 nothers Houses usually every Week, or as often

as their occasions permit, and there whilst they walk in the Garden or sit together by the fire (according as the Weather invites them) they make it their business to reinforce upon one another's minds the great Principles of Christianity, to affect their hearts mutually with the consequences of them. And when this is done (they say) they return home as much raised in their Spirits, and cheered in their very Countenances, as the most jolly Good Fellows do from their merry assignations.

Phil. This is a pretty piece of News you tell me: But I pray you (by the way) do you know any of these men well? Are they not Conventiclers? I tell you plainly I suspect this practice looks asquint that way.

Sebast. No; very far from it I assure you. Those I know of them are persons most observant of the Laws of their Countrey, constant and devout Frequenters of their Parish Church, true Friends of the Clergy, zealously affected towards the Common-Prayers and all the Offices of the Liturgy, and do as much abominate and discountenance every Instance of that factious Gadding, Gossiping pretence of Godliness, as any sort of men whatsoever do or ought to do; but having a quick sense of piety and a great concern upon them for another World, they endeavour by the aforesaid means to preserve and improve this temper in themselves, and to propagate it to others; and this they do the more securely, as being condemned by no Law; and the more innocently, as condemning none of those that do not imitate them.

G

But

But I do not mention this particular Club of persons with intention to make them a Precedent for all others; for besides that their custom is only voluntarily taken up, and upon no apprehensions of any necessary obligation upon them so to do, for then it would be a great burden upon the Consciences of men: there are also several inconveniences not unlikely to attend the practice, if not prudently managed, which I need not name; that therefore which I aimed at in the mention of these mens usage was (amongst other proofs) to shew that the World was not so abandoned of true zeal and piety as you suggested, that prophane Discourse hath not so universally obtained, nor that godly Conference was so antiquated and exploded; but that a Gentleman might still adventure to be found at it, without impeachment of his prudence or dignity.

And moreover, I humbly conceive, that by how much the more there is of truth in your observation, by so much the more are all serious and sensible men bound to put to their endeavours to turn the stream of Conversation from froth and folly, to this great and important Concern. For if this be out of fashion, the more is the shame; and it is a thousand pitties but that we should strive to bring it into fashion, if it were but to run down that prophane humour you speak of. And especially to repair the dishonour done to the Divine Majesty by those scurrilous Libertines, who with equal madness and folly let their tongues run riot against him.

What! shall we be mealy-mouth'd in a Good Cause,

Cause, when they are impudent in a bad one? Shall we be ashamed to owne God, when they defie him? Is God so inconsiderable a Being, that we dare not stand by him? Are Piety and Vertue things to be blushed at?

Is Eternal Salvation become so trivial a thing, that we should be unconcerned about it? Do we

*More Arguments
for religious Con-
ference.*

yield the Cause to these half-witted Profligates? Do we acknowledge the Gospel to be indeed ridiculous, or do we confess our selves the veriest Cowards in the World, and judge our selves unworthy of Eternal Life? For shame let us be so far from being either cow'd or byass'd by such Examples, that we resolve to make better where we cannot find them? Why should we think so meanly of our selves, as to follow only, and not to lead? In a word, Why may not we begin a good fashion, rather than fall in with a bad one?

Besides, I perswade my self this will be no very hard thing to do if we consider the Authority and Majesty of sincere and generous Piety, and the guilt and base spiritedness of Vice and Prophaneness; if we be soft and timorous, that grows rampant and intolerable; but if Vertue shine out in its own rays, it dazzles and baffles all those Birds of Night. If men will be perswaded to assert their own Principles manfully, to talk of God worthily and courageously, the veriest Ruffians will presently be gagged and tongue-tyed, as in Conjurations (they say) name but God, and the Devil vanishes; so enter resolutely into pious Conference, and it will presently lay all the Oaths and Blas-

phemies and scurrilous talk of those desperate Wretches.

And (by the way) this is the most gentile and also the most effectual way of reprovng that kind of persons, namely, to deal with them as Scholars deal by one another, when any one speaks false Latine, they only repeat it after him in true Latine, and as it ought to be; so here let us speak right things of God when they speak amiss, and there needs no more to damp them; they will either turn on your side and speak as you do, or leave the Field to you.

This, this, *Philander*, therefore is the only way to mend the World, and without this it will hardly ever be done. It is not good Books and Preaching that will retund a prophane humour; for such persons will either not read and hear them, or not consider them; nor is it Prayer and Fasting too that will cast out this deaf (but not dumb) Devil. But when good men are as bold as evil men are impudent, I mean as openly good as the other are bad, when piety is daring, and (if you will pardon the expression) Hectors lewdness out of Countenance; then, I say, the World will, if not grow devout, yet at least grow modest and civil towards Religion, when vertuous men give evidence that they believe themselves, when they demonstrate that the Kingdom of God is not in word only, but in power; when their Principles and pretensions appear in their Spirit, their Discourses, their whole Life and Conversation, when they continually breathe of God and of Heaven.

And (to say no more) by this course also a
man

man shall gain a worthy reputation and esteem to himself; for whereas a bashful, pusillanimous complying humour, that will crouch to a debauch for fear of offence, and falter and mince the matter of prophaneness to curry favour with lewd men, shall be despised and trodden down by every body. A brave generous Assertor of his Principles, and of God's honour, that fills the place and Company where he is with the sweet odours of Piety and Devotion, procures himself a veneration where-ever he goes, he looks like *Moses* when he came out of the Mount, his face shines and all men see a glory about him; insomuch that those that cannot find in their hearts to imitate him, yet cannot chuse but reverence and admire him.

Phil. I think your mind is an inexhaustible Fountain of Arguments on this Subject. Every occasion affords you a fresh tide of Eloquence; either you have very much studied this Point, or it is wonderfully pregnant of its own proofs: For my own part I cannot bear up against you. I confess I thought when we first entred on this particular, it was impossible that I should ever be of your opinion therein; but now I am so far from having any thing material to object, that I protest I am clearly satisfied that it would be a very wise thing, and well worthy of our endeavours to bring it into use and practice: I mean, as much as possibly we can to exclude idle Tales and Drollery out of our Converse, or at least to confine them to a narrower compass, and so to make way for this great affair of Religion.

But yet let me tell you, though you have con-

vinced me you have not silenced others; there are those will elude the Arguments they cannot answer, and expose what they are resolved not to comply withal: They will say, This talking of Religion is a Mountebank trick to impose upon the people, that it is a design of vain-glory, or an artifice to seem better than we are: They will tell you that sincerely good men use to be modest and silent, and to enjoy their sense of Piety in secret. In short, when you have said all you can to recommend this way of Conversation, they will say it is no better than Puritanism or Phanaticism; and having affixed such a name upon it, they will run both you and it down presently.

Sebast. Hearty thanks, Dear *Phil*, for putting me in mind of that danger which otherwise I should not have been aware of. I acknowledge I am so far unskilled in the World, that I was apt to think it was sufficient to a Cause to be back'd with good Proofs, and that when a business had recommended it self to the reason and conscience of men the work was done. I little thought men must be wheedled into a compliance with their own judgments, and much less that they would be so disingenuous towards themselves as to put a cheat upon their

*Godly Discourse
not Phanatical,
nor the Badge of
any Sect.*

own senses; nor did I sufficiently consider the power of Names to make good evil, and evil good, and that the best thing in the World may be run down by the mere blast of an odious Nick-name: Lord! what a venomous breath hath Common Fame, that it can change the nature of things? What

an huge Leviathan is vulgar Opinion, that it should be able to oppose it self to the best reason of Mankind, and to God Almighty too? If this be so, who would exercise their understanding, or dare to propound any generous thing to the World, and not rather set himself adrift to run with the Tide.

But yet this comforts me, that it looks like a Confession of the insuperable strength of my Arguments, when men resort to such subterfuges: It is a sign they dare not encounter me on the Square, that use such foul play, and that men are destitute of reason when they betake themselves to Libels and reproaches.

Let us then resume a little courage, it may be we shall conquer at last because our Adversaries despair of an honourable Victory. That which I contend for (you know) is this, That it becomes men to take all fit and fair occasions to speak worthily of God, and to make advantage of friendly conversation towards the improvement of one another in morals, as well as in secular or any other Concerns, and can any one be so absurdly malicious as to call this Phanaticism? Doth that deserve the odious Name of a Party which is the great and universal Concern of all Mankind? Is that to be accounted the peculiar *Shibboleth* of a Sect which speaks a Good Man and a Christian? Is that to be made a mark of infamy which the best men in the World wear as a Badge of Honour? Are we minded that this word Phanaticism should have the power of an Ostracism, and put a disgrace upon men for being too good.

If men in their Intercourses and Communi-

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cations deliberated about setting forth of some new God, or at least of some new Religion, there were just Cause of such an odious imputation; but to take opportunity to speak of the true God, and the old Religion gravely and piously, it cannot be that this should be Puritanism, unless it be so to be in earnest in Religion, which God forbid. Sure it is not the Character of any mere Sect amongst us to love God; and if it be not, then neither can it be so to talk of him affectionately, since the latter is the easie and natural issue and expression of the former. *David*, I remember, called his tongue his glory; and is that alone of all the powers of Soul and Body exempted from any part in doing honour to the Creator?

Are all men Puritans when they are sick or upon their Death-Beds? And yet then there are very few are so modish as to wave the talk of Religion, or to talk lightly and drollingly of it. Either therefore all dying men are Sectaries, or else they teach us then what we ought to practise at other times, if we be not unreasonably careless and desperate.

As for those that are really Phanatick, and are continually canting in a loathsome manner of Religion, those Parrots, that talk without any sense or apprehension of what they say, or those Ricketty Pharisees, that are all head and ears and tongue, but feeble in their hands and feet, that talk but do nothing; let these be called Puritans or Phanaticks, or what men please: But let no dishonour be reflected upon those that understand and believe what they say, and live up to what they believe and profess. For
though

though it may please those who have a mind to put a slur upon this instance of real piety which I am vindicating, to confound it with that other hypocritical guise of it, which I have now condemned, that so they may expose it to contempt and dishonour; yet as it is certain these two are as different things as Sense and Non-sense, or as Life and Varnish, so (impartial men being Judges) that very Paint and Pageantry bears evidence of the excellency of that Sincerity which I am recommending. For you know men do not use to counterfeit that which is of no value, painted beauty is a great Argument of the desirableness of that which is true and native; so there is certainly a very deserved admiration of holy Discourse, and a great power and charm in it, otherwise it would never be so artificially pretended to by such men, nor especially be sufficient to give countenance (as we find it doth) to their sinister purposes and designs: the World, I say, would not be so sottish as to be imposed upon by religious Cant, nor designing Hypocrites be so silly as to go about to abuse the World this way, if it were not an acknowledged Case that there is a real worth in that which they endeavour apishly to imitate. So that the Objections against us are unanswerable Arguments for us, and we have great assurance we shall carry our Cause when our very reproaches turn to our honour.

But what if after all this, *Phil*, I should take the boldness to assert that such holy intercourse as I am speaking of, and especially under those Conditions and

*Godly Conference
an effectual way
to supplant Pha-
naticism.*

Qualifications

Qualifications I have put upon it, is so far from Phanaticism or Puritanism, or any Sectarian *O-dium*, that on the contrary (if the practice of it became general amongst good men) it would be the most effectual way in the World to dash those formal disguises out of Countenance, and to put all Phanatical tricks out of all request and reputation. This, I believe, will seem a Paradox to you at first; but I am very confident you will be of my mind when you have considered, That the only, or at least the principal thing which that sort of men support themselves by is the Gift of tongue, a peculiar knack of talking religiously: For if you look into their lives and temper, they have no advantage of other men; and if you examine either their Principles or their abilities, these will not mend the matter: and yet they have strange authority and influence in the World; they charm men into security of their honesty by their talk, they cast a mist before mens Eyes that they are taken for godly men, let their pride and passion, their covetousness and ambition, be otherwise as palpable and notorious as they can. This Talent of talking is so valuable, it redeems them from suspicion, with this Pass-Port they go undetected, they are Saints from the teeth outwards, and Fools admire them, and so they compass their ends.

Now were all sincerely good men so sensible of this as they ought to be, and would they in earnest apply themselves to grave and serious and pious Discourse in the habit of their Conversations, these Jack-Daws would be deprived of their borrowed Feathers, and those
crafty

crafty men would not have a Mask or Vizard left them to cheat the World withal.

You will say, perhaps they would out-shoot those good men in their own Bow, and talk at an higher rate in hypocrisie than the other could do in sincerity. But for answer: Do but consider whether there be not a greater power in Life than in mere shew and pageantry, whether that which proceeds from the thoughts and heart and Principles within be not likely to have more vigour and spirit than that which hath no root, no foundation; but is begotten and lives and dies between the tongue and teeth. Do not you observe that nothing so much disparages a Picture as the presence of him for whom it was drawn? Life hath a thousand vigours and beauties which no hand of the Painter can reach and display. So hath spiritual Life, when it puts forth it self, a spirit, a warmth, an air, or whatsoever you will call it, which cannot be so imitated, but it will shame and detect the Rival. The great mischief of the World therefore, and the only security of Hypocrisie, is, that the Truth and Life disappears, and gives its Counterfeit the Stage intirely to act upon; but let that appear and confront its Adversary, and Hypocrisie will be sensible of an unequal match, and blush or withdraw it self. When, I say, men that feel the power of Religion in their own Souls will be perswaded to express themselves habitually, manly and judiciously, they will baffle and confound all theatrical Pretenders to Religion. And now, *Phil*, what is become of that formidable Objection, as you and I thought it at first? May not we now adventure to talk of Religion

Religion without the danger of Phanaticism?

Phil. Yes, I see clearly we may; and not only so, but you have now convinced me that for that very reason we ought to do it, as the best way to supplant Phanaticism. But at the worst, if there were some danger that I should incur the rash censure of some that I value, and were likely to be called Phanatick for my pains, I would not stick to serve so many great and excellent ends at that hazard, if I could.

Sebast. Bravely resolved, my good Friend! now you speak like a man and a Christian; there's the very Point of Vertue: He that is too tender and delicate hath not the courage to be good, and he that will venture nothing here will win nothing in the other World. You know my sense already, that good nature is an excellent and useful Companion of Vertue; but as the Case may happen, a little morosity is necessary to preserve them both; But, I pray you, why did you put an *if* at the last? after all do you question whether it be possible to discourse piously?

Phil. No, good *Sebastian*, that is not it; for you have convinced me of the fecibleness, as well as the excellency of that kind of Conversation; but you know (as I have said before) that is out of the road of Discourse; and besides the difficulty of bringing those one converses with to it, it is natural for a man to follow his old Biases: If I were once entered into such a Communication, I am sure I should embrace it, and I think I could continue it. But there is a sheepish kind of modesty in this (as well as in other things) that checks and restrains a man from

from beginning that which neither he nor his Companions have been used to. If therefore you can help me to conquer my self as well as to answer Objections, to overcome my temper as well as to submit my judgment, I would then set about it as well as I could.

Sebast. With all my heart; only with this Condition, as well as I can (as you say.) But I pray give me leave to ask you a Question by the bye, and not to decline that which you have put to me; the Case is this, It is commonly observed that good men find such a modesty (as you speak of) to restrain them when they are setting themselves to begin some good Discourse; insomuch that sometimes with very great difficulty (if at all) they can screw themselves up to it; but contrariwise, lewd and profane men rant and Hector at an intolerable rate, they will blaspheme and burlesque Religion when they are in their humour without regard to God and man: now seeing the former have all the reason in the World on their side, and the other as much against them, what is it that makes this difference in their spirit and temper?

Phil. That I may come the sooner at the solution of my own difficulty, I will answer your Question as briefly as I can; and I think it may be resolved into these several Causes, first, Profane men are generally very grossly ignorant; for I cannot imagine that any thing else should make them bold with God Almighty. And though they pretend to wit, yet a man to their own tooth hath

What makes profane men so bold in their assaults upon Religion.

hath told us, That a certain Dose of that thing called Wit is a necessary ingredient into the Composition of a very ridiculous Fool. And I have heard it hath been said by a better man than he, That a smattering in knowledge (which is the measure of a Wit) disposes men to Atheism, whereas a full proportion would carry them through to the sense of God and Religion. The second Cause I assign is, That these men having abandoned Vertue, they have therewith lost all good nature and civil respect; and are delivered up to insolence and an affronting humour. And thirdly, I make no great doubt but the Devil, whose work they do, assists them in it. And now you will easily think there needs no other concurrence; yet I will add another, and that is Drunkenness: for methinks it should be out of the power of the Devil himself to tempt a sober man to such a Villany; but in the rage of Drink God is defied, and every thing that is sacred. But now to my Question.

Sebast. First, *Phil*, let me kiss your hands for your ingenious Answer to my Query: and then in the second place, I wish I could answer yours as well. The plain truth is (as I have acknowledged to you before) I have been in that Oven, and therefore cannot wonder to find another man there; and though I cannot always conquer my bashfulness, yet in such Cases I always endeavour it, and I will tell you by what methods, and so I hope the same remedies may relieve us both.

First then when I enter into Company with design to engage them in good Discourse, I endeavour,

deavour, if it be possible, to make some Friend privy to my Plot, who perhaps shall sit at some distance from me, but understanding his Cue shall be always ready to second me in what I undertake; and so by an honest Confederacy we can carry on the business. And this I do especially if I apprehend the Company to consist either of prophane persons or captious Witts. For if a modest man should in such a Case begin an unusual Discourse, and have no body to follow him, he will not only miscarry of his purpose, but be abashed and confounded. But if he have one prepared to comply with him, they shall both have time to recollect themselves, and to carry the Ball of Discourse whither they please.

In the next place, *when* I am destitute of the assistance of such an Associate to second and relieve me, then if I apprehend I have an opportunity of discoursing usefully, I resolve to begin whatever come of it, that is, I forcibly break silence, though it be with trembling and paleness and faltering and without any well contrived expressions: And when once the Ice is broken the worst is past, then presently my colour and speech and spirits will return again. For to proceed is very easie then, because, as I have noted before, the Objects of Religion lye so ready to a mans thoughts that he cannot be at a loss in the Sequel of his Discourse.

*Means to raise
our Spirits to a
fit temper for re-
ligious Communi-
cation.*

In order hereto I endeavour to raise in my own heart a great zeal of God's Glory, and a generous design of doing good to those I converse with.

with. And therefore I think with my self I am not only to stand upon my guard and secure my self from infection, nor much less to be a mere Negative, and content my self to do no hurt to my Acquaintance, but that it is expected from me I should benefit them, and season their intercourse with something vertuous and graceful.

Moreover, I endeavour in the whole Conduct of my self, and the habit of my life, to arrive at a seriousness of spirit and a deepness of thought, without which neither shall I be in temper to begin or carry on any such weighty Discourse with others, nor will they expect it from me; a light trifling jesting Spirit is good for nothing but sport and may-game. Such as can ordinarily find in their hearts to step aside to a quibble or a clinch, are generally men so unfit for Religion, that they are seldom useful to themselves in any secular business: But a serious man hath his thoughts about him, and his very mien and countenance raises the expectation of the Company, and so they are half prepared to receive his impressions. Now to bring my self to this temper, I often represent to my self God's Omnipresence, and that I am before a mighty, wise and most reverend Majesty, who takes notice of all my carriage and demeanour. I think frequently of the Judgment to come, and the wonderful accuracy and solemnity of it, of the unspeakable concerns of Hell and Heaven, and the whole affair of another World. By these Considerations I curb the levity and wantonness of my spirit, and so become both furnished with fit thoughts to communicate,

municate, and also with a proper temper to communicate them.

Besides this, I make it my earnest endeavour to be as much above the World as I can, I mean to have as indifferent an esteem of Riches and Fame, &c. as is possible, that my heart may not eagerly and intently run upon them: For I find by woful experience, that whensoever it warps that way, I am sure to be listless and formal in any such enterprize as we are speaking of; but whensoever I can contemn them, then I am as it were all spirit, and have so lively impresses of another World upon me, that I can almost make it visible to my Companions.

Amongst all these I pray daily and earnestly for God's Grace and assistance, that he will every where be present to me by his Holy Spirit, and put useful thoughts into my heart, and give me courage to express them, so as to beget the like in others.

This, Sir, is the method I take with my self; and having, I thank God, often succeeded well with it against a Cowardly heart of my own, I cannot but expect it will have greater and more signal effects upon you.

Phil. God verifie the Omen. However, I thank you most heartily for the Receipt, which I will keep as long as I live.

Sebast. But I pray, Good *Phil.* do not make it publick; for though I envy no Body the benefit of my Experience, yet I would be loth the World should know what a shameful Disease I have been sick of.

Phil. O Sir, timidity is but a natural infirmity, and hath not much shame attending it: But

I must tell you, as my Confessor or Physician, which you will, of another Disease I labour under, so shameful and scandalous, that scarce any Body will owne it ; and that is ignorance, if I had courage enough for the business (we have all this while been speaking of) yet I am afraid by my unskilfulness I shall spoil all: let me therefore pray you to afford me your advice in this Case also.

Sebast. Fear it not, *Phil*, a man of your cheerful countenance, sprightly vigour, and benignity of temper, can never labour under any such Disease.

Phil. Good *Sebastian* be not too secure of me; for this is a business of that nature, that unless it be done gracefully it had better be let alone, and especially because the enterprize is somewhat new and unusual; therefore the greater dexterity and management is required, to give it a good appearance at its setting out, and so to lay a foundation for its coming into common use and reputation: and besides, it concerns you in point of your own credit to furnish me out well, for seeing it is you only that have put me upon it, the dishonour will redound to you, if I miscarry in the undertaking.

Sebast. In earnest, Sir, and without a Complement you are known to be a man of so good Parts that you can never want Materials, and then your sweetness of address will not fail to give great advantage and acceptance to your Discourses. Now it is an hard thing, that because you are pleased to think me wise, therefore I must shew my self to be a Fool; but that's a small matter between Friends: therefore since
you

you will have it so, I will tell you the effect of my Observation in this matter.

And the first thing to our purpose which I remark is, the Example of our Saviour, (and who can we better learn of ?) And he, I observe,

Prudential advices about religious Conference.

had a dexterity of applying every accidental occurrence to his holy purposes, as it were by a kind of Chymistry separating the gross matter, and subliming ordinary affairs to Heavenly Doctrine: insomuch, that there was scarcely any common affair of Life, such as eating or drinking, or recreation, no disease or infirmity of the Body, no Trade and Occupation, such as Merchandice or Husbandry, no Building or Planting, Plowing or Sowing, nay not so mean employments as Womens leavening their Bread, grinding at the Mill, or sweeping an House, but he spiritualized them and applied them to his designs.

Now if we would learn of him, and endeavour to imitate this dexterity, we might with great ease and without all violence surprize men into Religion; and not only at every turn introduce pious Discourse, but render the Subject of it intelligible to the meanest capacities, and withal by those sensible resemblances give such lively touches upon the minds of men, as that what we delivered upon those occasions would stick and remain with them.

And there is no great pains or skill required for the doing of this, the principal requisite to it is a zeal of God's Glory, and such a constant and fixed Eye upon it as shall make us apprehensive of the opportunities that present them-

selves, and then a little humility to condescend to the weakness of people; which two things presupposed, a very small exercise of fancy would draw the parallels, and make the application; as any man will quickly find that will set himself about it.

As for instance, when we visit a sick Friend or Neighbour, what a fair opportunity have we to discourse of the Immortality of the Soul, and what an easie transition is it from a Physician to a Saviour? Or why may we not as well cheer up our afflicted Friend with the comforts of Religion, as well as amuze or divert him with impertinent Stories? Or suppose Friends be together, and disposed to be merry, why may not some word come in seasonably of the Everlasting Friendships in Heaven, or of the continual Feast of a good Conscience? Why may not the common Chat about News be elevated to the consideration of the good tidings of the Gospel? What hinders but our Dishes of Meat may be seasoned with a gracious word or two about the Food of our Souls? When men are talking of Old Age, it would be no great strain if thence our thoughts rise up to Eternal Life. Nor any great flight of phancy is requisite to improve all the accidents of our lives to the contemplation of Divine Providence, which orders and governs them. In a word, every thing is capable of improvement if we be not wanting; we shall never want opportunity if we embrace it; any thing will serve an intent mind and a devout heart to these purposes.

My second remark is, upon the Custom of those several persons in the Gospel, that upon
divers

divers occasions entred into Conference with our Saviour, which I note they always began by way of Question or Doubt, as men desirous to be informed rather than affecting to teach or dictate. This was not only the way of *Nicodemus*, *Joh. 3.* of the Woman of *Samaria*, *Joh. 4.* and of the young rich man, *Matth. 19.* who came in earnest to be instructed; but of the Scribes and Pharisees and Sadduces, who came to dispute: And indeed I have heard, this modest way of propounding a Question, and expecting and replying to the Answer, was the old way of Disputation. And certainly this is of great use in our Case, for the more easie and acceptable introduction of the serious matters of Religion into ordinary Conversation. When we do not violently break in upon the Company, but civilly make our way; not abruptly obtrude our Sentiments, but insinuate them; not malapertly reprove other mens errors, or superciliously dictate our own Opinions; not fall upon Preaching, or throw down our Gantlet, and challenge the Company to a Combate: but modestly appear in the Garb of Learners, and propound a Case, as to men wiser than our selves, for our own satisfaction. This course, instead of offending, exceedingly obliges those we apply our selves to; forasmuch as every man is glad to be accounted wise and fit to be consulted with.

As suppose you should ask the persons you are with what they think of such or such an Argument for the Immortality of the Soul, or for the proof of a particular Providence; or ask their advice how to answer such an Objection

that comes in your way against either of those, or any other fundamental Point of Religion: And though such Questions may at first seem merely speculative; yet if they be pursued wisely and with that intention, they will infallibly lead to practice.

Or suppose you put a Case about Temperance, as namely, What are the Rules and measures of sobriety, so as also to avoid scrupulosity; How far is Worldly care evil and vicious, and how far innocent and allowable; What is the predicament of careless and common Swearing, and what kind of sins it is reducible to.

Or more generally, How a man may discern his own proficiency in Vertue, and what preparation of a man's self is flatly necessary against the uncertainty of Life, and to secure the great stake of an interest in another World.

Or, to name no more, What the Company thinks of such or such a passage in a Sermon you lately heard, or in such a Book. These and a thousand more such easie inlets there are into good Discourse without imputation of pragmatism, and which a little presence of mind will improve to what purposes we desire.

Another thing that I have observed in order to this affair is, what I have learned from the Custom of prudent men, to insinuate that by a Story which would not be so well received if it were directly and bluntly delivered. Telling of Stories, you know, is a common Theme of Conversation, and if a man have any graceful way of telling them, and especially use any prudence in the choice of them; he hath the Company

pany in his power, and may lead them to what Discourse he will: And besides, men will admit of that to be said in the third person which they will not bear in the second.

Now to this purpose suppose a man should have in readines a Story of some remarkable judgment of God upon some notorious sin, that he would by all means deterr those he converses with from, no body could take offence at the Story, and yet every mans Conscience would make application of it. Or suppose a man should in lively Colours describe some excellent person, he would not only put all the Hearers into the thoughts of those Vertues that were so described; but stir up jointly a modest shame in them for their own shortness, and an emulation of so brave an Example. But to be sure he shall hereby give himself an introduction (without affectation) of discoursing of which soever of those eminent Vertues he pleases. These and many such other ways there are which your own prudence and Observation will represent to you better than I can; by which a discreet person may engage any Company (in which it is fit for an honest man to be found) in good Discourse.

But I will not omit upon this occasion to tell you a Story, which I have from very good hands, of two very eminent men, both for Learning and Piety, in the last Age (or rather the beginning of the present) the one of them a great Prelate (indeed a Primate) and the other a Church-man of great note and preferment. These two Great Men, as they often met together to consult the interest of Learning, and the affairs of the Church, so when they had dis-

patched that, they seldom parted from one another without such an encounter as this: Come, Good Doctor, (saith the Bishop) let us now talk a little of Jesus Christ; Or, on the other side, said the Doctor, Come, my Lord, let me hear your Grace speak of the goodness of God with your wonted Piety and Eloquence, let us warm one anothers hearts with Heaven, that we may the better bear this cold World. I cannot tell you the words that passed between them, nor can you expect it from me; but I am sufficiently assured of the matter of fact. And this they performed with that holy reverence and ardent zeal, with that delightful sense and feeling, that afforded matter of admiration to those of their Friends or Servants that happened to be present, or to over-hear them. Here is now an Example of holy Conference without a Preface, and yet without exception; a Precedent not only justifying all I have said, but easy to imitate where-ever there is a like spirit of piety: a few such men would put prophaneness out of Countenance, and turn the tide of Conversation.

Phil. Shall I crave of you to tell me the names of those two persons?

Sebast. Their names are so well known, that I think you might spare the Question; but they were *U* — and *P* —

Phil. I guess who you mean; and I would to God there were more of them. I doubt I shall never be able to imitate, but I am resolved to write after so fair a Copy as well as I can: therefore pray you, if you have any further directions for the guiding of my hand, let me have them.

Sebast.

Sebast. I see you are in earnest; God's Blessing on your heart for it. All that I have to say, or (as I think) can be said more, may be summed up in these few following Cautions:

First, You must remember that (which was said before) you are not always to be endeavouring at Discourse of Religion; other Discourse, so it be manly and pertinent, is not only lawful, but necessary in its season. The Wise-man tells us there is a time for all things; to overdo is to do nothing to the purpose; and to exclude all other innocent and ingenious Conversation for the sake of Religion, is to make Religion irksome, and the certain way to shut it quite out of the World.

Secondly, Because religious Conference is not always a Duty, therefore it is a peculiar season and opportunity that makes it at any time become so, and consequently that is to be watched and laid hold upon. My meaning is, that when men are in drink or in passion, it is no fit time to enter on this Subject; for it will be but to cast Pearls before Swine; it can do those persons no good at such times, and it may do us hurt and Religion too. But when men are in the calmest and soberest moods, then is the only time for this intercourse.

Thirdly, It is very adviseable that we make a distinction of persons, as well as times, for this business. You know the World is not all of a size, some are our Superiors, others are our Inferiors or Equals; there are some very acute and learned men, some dull and ignorant; some are captious, others sincere and plain-hearted; some prophane, and others pious; in a word, there
are

are old and young, rich and poor, cheerful and melancholy, and abundance other such differences in mens circumstances: All which require a peculiar Address, if we intend to fasten any good thing upon them. But of this I need say no more, knowing to whom I speak.

Again, fourthly, It is a matter of prudence that our Essays of this kind be rather perfective than destructive, that is, that we do not take upon us authoritatively to quash and controul other Discourse, but rather take advantage of any occasional passages and hints, from whence to improve and raise it insensibly to that we would be at.

Lastly, That out of indulgence to the levity, and in compliance with the curiosity of mens minds, we should not always harp upon one String; but sometimes designedly lay aside our business, and then resume it again, as in Musick to sink and let fall a Note, and by and by get it up again; that by such variety we may afford the more delightful entertainment to those that are our Companions. And now, I doubt, I have quite tired you; therefore it is time to bid you a good Night.

Phil. Dear *Sebastian*, shall I tell you a plain truth? When first we came together this Evening, your Conversation methought was so much out of the mode, that though I considered you as an honest Gentleman, yet I suspected I should have uneasy Company with you: But now I phansie you are like some of those old stately Buildings I have seen, which are a little rough and weather-beaten without, but for all that are substantially strong, and express very admirable

fable art within ; or as I have heard it was said of *Socrates*, that he was like Apothecaries Boxes, that had the Picture of an Ape, a Satyr, or perhaps a Serpent without side, but contained excellent Medicaments : so you, that I feared would be my Disease, have been my Physician ; and, which is more, have set me up for one too.

Sebast. Nay then good night again, if you be for Complements : But if you have any real value for me, I hope you will now do me the favour of your Company at my House some other Evening.

Phil. Never doubt it, Sir, your dead men shall scarcely haunt you more than I will do. But good night heartily.

The End of the First Conference.

A

A
Winter-Evening
CONFERENCE.

PART II.

Prov. xxvii. 17.

As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend.

1 Cor. xv. 33.

Evil communications corrupt good manners.

James H. Smith

COUNTY ENGINEER

PAGE 11

1870

to the County Engineer, to be filed in the
office of the County Engineer.

1870

to the County Engineer, to be filed in the
office of the County Engineer.

A Second
 Winter-Evening
 CONFERENCE
 AT THE
 House of SEBASTIAN.

The ARGUMENT of the Second
 CONFERENCE.

In the former Conference, Sebastian having convinced Philander of the great importance of Religion, and the wisdom of making it as well the Subject of Social Communication as of retired Meditation: Accordingly they two meet on purpose this second time to confer about it. But Biophilus, a sceptical person, being in their Company, he at first diverts them from their design by other Discourse; till after a while, under the disguise of News, he is wheedled into this Subject before he was aware: And then he puts them upon the proof of those Principles which they would have supposed. Upon this occasion the foundations of Religion are searched into, and particularly that Great Point concerning A Judgment to come, is substantially proved:
Which

Which being done, and Biophilus thereby rendered somewhat more inclinable to be serious, they then pursue their first intentions, and discourse warmly and sensibly of another World, and of the necessary preparations for it, so long till they not only inflame their own hearts with devotion, but strike some sparks of it into Biophilus also.

Philander. **Y**OU see, *Sebastian*, I am as good as my promise; and at this time so much better, as I have brought my Neighbour *Biophilus* along with me.

Sebast. I always took you for a man of your word; but now you have not only acquitted your self, but obliged me.

Biophilus. Your humble Servant, Good *Sebastian*: I know you are a studious person; yet I thought Company would not be unacceptable to you, at this Season.

Sebast. You are heartily welcome, Sir: I love my Books well, but my Friends better. Come, Gentlemen, will it please you to draw near the Fire? the Weather is very sharp still.

Phil. The cold continues: But, thanks be to God, the Evenings are not so tedious since I saw you last.

Bioph. How can that be, *Philander*? The Weather indeed may change on a sudden, and become colder or warmer upon several accidents; but seeing the Sun keeps his constant Course, the *interim* of a few days can make no discernible difference in the length or shortness of the Evenings.

Phil. O but here is a Friend hath taught me an Art for that, a way to make time longer or shorter

shorter at pleasure, nay (which perhaps will encrease your wonder) both these seeming Contraries shall be coincident. A man shall have more time to spend, and less to spare; more for his use and pleasure, and none to be a burden to him.

*Of improvement
of time.*

Bioph. Can Art do that? That is a noble skill indeed, (if it be possible) to shorten a mans time, and yet prolong his life. Sure you speak Riddles; however, I pray, make me Partaker of the mystery.

Phil. Good Neighbour, there is no other Secret in it but this: Good Company and profitable Conversation redeem time from folly and impertinency, and so we really live longer, and they also spend the time very pleasantly, and so our lives seem to be the shorter.

Bioph. That's pretty, I confess; but I had rather it had been literally true.

Sebast. I believe *Biophilus* remembers a Proverbial Saying they have in *Italy* to this purpose, *He that would have a short Lent, let him borrow money to be repaid at Easter.* So he that forecasts the Account which every man must one day make, how he hath expended the time of this Life, will not be apt to think the term of it to be overlong. And he on the other side who improves his time as he ought, and hath his Accounts in readiness, will not think the Day of reckoning too soon or sudden.

Bioph. Very good again: But nevertheless, with your pardon, Gentlemen, I should argue the quite contrary from your Premises. For if there be a Judgment to come, (as you are pleased to suppose)

*A touch of Epi-
curean Doctrine.*

suppose) and that a man must render an account of all his actions another day; This, methinks, should curdle all his delights, and the very thoughts of such a thing filling him with perpetual fears and sollicitude about it, must needs make Life very tedious to him. But if there be no such thing to be feared hereafter, then Life will seem short, because it will be sweet and comfortable: and then also a man shall in effect live a great while in a little time, when there is nothing to disturb his thoughts, to impeach his pleasures or interrupt the enjoyment of himself.

Phil. Yes, even in the Case which you put, Death will be sure to come shortly, and that will spoil his sport.

Bioph. That is very true and very sad: If therefore you could find out a remedy for that, you would do something to purpose. But when as you cannot but observe that there are several sorts of Brute Creatures that out-live Mankind, (I mean though they know not what it is to live, yet) they continue longer in the World, and have as well a quicker sense of pleasure, as a more unlimited and uncontrolled enjoyment of it; in both which respects we have too great cause to envy their happiness. If Mankind after all this must be perpetually tormented too with suspicions of what may come after, they are doubly miserable, and under the hardest fate of all Creatures.

Sebast. That very thing which you now observe, is to me a very great Argument of what you oppose. For upon those very considerations, viz. that the Life of man in this World is shorter than that of some other less considerable Creatures,

Creatures, and that the pleasure thereof is interrupted also by the expectation of the future; upon those very grounds (say I) there is great reason to believe that there is such a thing as another World wherein he may have amends made him for whatever was amiss or defective here. For it is not credible with me that such power and wisdom as is plainly display'd in the Constitution of man, should be so utterly destitute of goodness, as to contrive things so ill, that the noblest Being should be finally the most unfortunate.

To which I must add, that therefore the apprehension of such a Judgment to come as we speak of, neither is nor can be mere matter of dread and horror, (as you seem to suppose) but is either terrible or comfortable, respectively to mens preparations for it: I

cannot wonder if the thoughts of it do so fright and discompose evil men, so that they could with all their hearts wish there was no

Of the different prospects different men have of the other World.

such thing. But most certainly to wise and virtuous men, it is so far from being formidable, that contrariwise the hope of it is the very joy of their hearts, the support of their Spirits, their greatest security against all the cross accidents of this World, and in a word their Port and Sanctuary.

Bioph. These are fine Sayings, *Sebastian*; but when you have said all you can, and made the best of the Case, when it comes to the proof, I do not find men in love with dying, nor to have so comfortable an opinion of that other World you speak of; but that they could wish all their hearts be content to quit their in-

terest in the latter, so they might put off the former. I remember once when I was present at an Execution, amongst the rest of condemned Malefactors, there was one who either was so secure of his own innocency, or so confident of the sufficiency of his preparations for Death, or, which I rather suspect, so elevated and transported with the Harangues of the Priest, that he seemed to long for his near-approaching end, and pretended he would not exchange his condition for that of any of the Spectators there present : But by and by comes the surprizing News of a Pardon or Reprieve, and the poor man was ready to leap out of his skin for joy.

And I have often observed men, who when they have been desperately sick, and past all hopes of Life, then (as it is usual with men in danger of drowning to catch hold of any thing that offers it self for their support) to set a good face on the matter, and (as we say) make a Vertue of Necessity, and welcome the approach of Death with seeming courage and constancy : But in this juncture, let but a Physician appear that gives them any hopes of recovery, they presently start back from the brink of another World, as from an horrible Precipice, and smile upon the Messenger that brings the good tidings of Life. I cannot see therefore that men do indeed believe themselves in this matter.

Sebast. There is no doubt, *Biophilus*, but that (as you say) some men may talk only, and set a good face upon that which they have no comfortable sense of. And no wonder if such mens courage fails them when they have most use of it : for it is not imaginable that it should

Should be easie to brazen it out against Death. But this is no more reproach to true Faith in God and hopes of another World, than it is to generous Courage and Valour, that now and then you shall see an huffing swaggering Hector turn recreant when he is put to it in earnest. It is acknowledged to be very easie to brag and vapour when no danger is near ; but it requires real bravery to stand to it when a man is briskly encountered : Now as you will not say there is no such thing as Valour, because there are some Cowards that pretend to it ; so neither (I presume) will you think fit to suppose there is no Faith, because there is some Hypocrisie.

Besides, if you were as well satisfied as I am or pretend to be of the truth of that we are discoursing upon, namely, of another World ; yet your experience of the common course of mens lives would force you to acknowledge, that even amongst those that do profess to believe such a thing, there are but very few who appear to be habitually well prepared for so great a Tryal ; and therefore no wonder if such persons be somewhat startled and discomposed at an immediate Summons, and could be very glad to have further day given them to make up so great an Account. For however a tolerable course of living may make a shift to support a mans hopes whilst Death is looked upon at a distance ; yet when it comes to the Point, that a man must die indeed, it is very reasonable to expect that such men as we now speak of should be not a little sollicitous in such a concern, where they know the miscarriage is fatal, and the best provision possible will be little enough.

But notwithstanding all this, there are certainly, and have been sundry persons in the World, who though they have had the same natural affection to themselves and to the present life with others, yet have as heartily wished and longed for the Great Day, as it was lawful for them to do. They know it is their Duty to maintain the station God hath set them in, till they have a fair dismissal; but bating that consideration, I doubt not but many a good man would sue out his *Quietus est*, and gladly embrace an opportunity of bidding farewell to the World.

Bioph. You say well; but how shall this Case be decided? Where may a man find any such person as you speak of?

Sebast. Perhaps you have not heard any man sing his *Nunc dimittis*; or if you had, it may be you would not have believed him to be in earnest: But what think you of St. Paul, who professes *he desires to be dissolved, and to be with Christ*? and particularly, 2 Tim. 4. 7. he foresees a violent Death approaching him, and upon that occasion he by way of contemplation places himself, as it were, upon a Promontory, where he could look backward and forward, and take a view of both Worlds; and when he reflects upon that which he was leaving, he finds that he had discharged his part well and worthily, whilst he was in it; *I have fought the good fight, (saith he) I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.* But then when he looks forward and takes a prospect of what was to come, here he triumphs and exults with joy, *Henceforth is laid up for me a Crown of righteousness, which* God

God the righteous Judge shall give me: As if he said, "I know no cause that I should either be ashamed to live, or afraid to die; I have no reason to be very fond of life, who have met with so many afflictions in it, yet I that have born them so undauntedly hitherto, can have as little reason to leave the World now in a pet of impatience: But upon the whole matter, I see great advantage on the other side, and the other World is as much better than the present, as Harvest is than labour, as Victory than Battel, and as being at home than in travel and on a Journey.

Or what do you think of so many thousand Martyrs, who have not only gone out of the World with smiles in their Faces, and Songs in their Mouths, but have chosen Death when they might have lived as freely, as happily, and as long as other men: They were not worn out with Age, nor vexed and wearied with Poverty, nor distracted by any disaster; they had as tender and sensible Constitutions as other men, as much natural affection to themselves, and as sound reason to judge what was best, and yet despised the present Life and World in comparison of that to come.

Bioph. Nay, as for those men of old, which you speak of, I cannot tell what to make of them: But I would fain see such a man now.

Sebast. I make no Question but I could direct you to such men now; but it may be you will not believe they despise Death, because you see them yet living; however, what think you of the man that hath the bravery to deny himself those profits and pleasures which other men al-

low themselves, (so long as they see no infamy or external danger attend them) what think you of the man that dares to be vertuous in a lewd Age and in evil Company, and hath the courage and prowess to confront a whole World with his Example? What think you of the man that sits so loose to the World, that he can bear Prosperity without being supercilious, and Adversity without being dejected, that can be in want without repining, and can be liberal without upbraiding? Or, to say no more, What think you of the man that scorns to crouch and sneak, and parasitically to humour and flatter others for his secular interest or security? Such men as these are to be found in the present Age; and where-ever you find any such man, assure your self there is a person that believes himself, or rather that believes in God, and hath as real a perswasion of the World to come, as other men have of that which they see with their Eyes, and touch with their Fingers.

Bioph. I believe there are some such men as you speak of, and I do account them brave and worthy persons: but these instances come not up to the Point, forasmuch as some of these will quail at the approach of Death as well as other men

Sebast. It may happen so, that a vertuous man may be a little discomposed at the rude assaults of Death, and yet without any blemish either to his Faith or Vertue: For in the first place, you know all men have a natural love of Life, and an abhorrence of Death, and from hence may proceed some sudden reluctancies, because it is neither within the power of reason, nor is it the Office of Religion, utterly to exterminate

nate and extinguish these first motions ; but to subdue and govern them, so as that a man may (after some conflict) pursue the choice of his mind notwithstanding them, and this latter you shall see them perform.

And then besides, you know there are some men of more timorous natures than others, in-somuch that a great measure of Vertue will not do the same thing in such, as a lesser proportion, assisted by hardiness of temper, will do in others. For Nature will be Nature still ; and therefore you shall observe that even amongst those that have no apprehension of any thing to come after Death, (if we may believe themselves) and so consequently can have no cause of fear ; yet will be found those that are as timorous as those that expect a Judgment to come, witness your Friend Mr. H.

Moreover, you cannot but be aware that a violent Disease, or pain, or any of those Fore-runners of Death, do ordinarily infeeble the operations of the mind, as well as of the Body, and disorder mens reason so, that it is hard to pronounce of mens prowess by the Combat they then maintain ; therefore the surest way of deciding this matter, is that which I directed you to before, namely, when you see a man in his full strength voluntarily and understandingly do that which will certainly draw Death after it, this hath certainly more bravery and self-denial in it, more contempt of life and the world, and more argument of hopes in another world, than can be drawn from the contingencies in the very agony of Death.

Bioph. Well, perhaps it may be so : But for God's sake, Gentlemen, let us wave this uncomfortable

Of News ; and News-mongers exposed. comfortable Subject. Come, what good News is there stirring?

Phil. O Sir, that is a prohibited Commodity you enquire for, neither of us deal in it.

Bioph. Nay, truly for my part I wish it had been prohibited sooner ; for there hath been so much Knavery and Sophistication in it, that several well-meaning men have been cheated of their Peace, their Loyalty, and almost out of their Wits too by it.

But so long as we are not bound to believe all that we hear, we may hear what men talk of, for our diversion.

Sebast. Hearing and telling of News seems to me to be just such another diversion as tipling is. And it is much the same thing whether a mans Head be full of vapours, or of Proclamations : Wind in the Brain makes men giddy as well as Wine, and men reel and stagger to and fro as unseemly by the impulse of uncertain rumours, as those that are intoxicated with the strongest Liquors. Besides, just as he that knows not how to entertain himself at home, usually applies himself to the Tavern or the Ale-House for his relief ; so it is the custom of idle people, and such as are negligent of their own affairs, to busie themselves in matters that do not belong to them : And there is yet another thing worse than all this, namely, whereas the Tavern-Drunkard sleeps and evaporates his Wine, and comes to himself again, the Coffee House Drunkard scarcely ever clearly dispels those Vapours of News that have filled his Crown.

Bioph. That is smartly spoken : But however

ver a man shall look like a Male-content with the times, or at least will seem to be unconcerned for his Country, that wholly disregards News.

Sebast. With reverence to publick opinion, I should think the quite contrary in both Particulars. For in the first place it is notorious that the Male-content is always listening after novelty, and I cannot tell whether his head be fuller of little Stories, or of Maggots; whereas the man in good humour and contented, minds only his own business, and lets it alone to God and the King to govern the World.

And then for the other Particular, it is the easiest thing in the World to observe that your right News-Monger cares not a rush which end goes forward, or whether the state of things be good or bad for his Country, so there be News for his own entertainment.

But after all, now I think better of it, I have a very remarkable Story to tell you: But you are so great a Critick you will believe nothing, and therefore I had as good hold my peace.

Bioph. Nay, Good *Sebastian*, let us have it: You are a person of good Intelligence, if you will please to communicate.

Sebast. It is so very strange and wonderful News, that I suspect your Faith; but yet it is such as puts me almost into an ecstasie every time I think upon it.

*Sebastian's
strange News of a
New-found-land.*

Bioph. Do not Tantalize us with expectation, whilst you raise the value of your Story, nor tempt our phancies to anticipate and de-flower it.

Sebast. Why then it is the discovery and description of a certain Country, which is (by relation)

lation) the very Garden and Paradise of the whole World, so transcendently admirable, that *Italy*, *Thessaly*, or whatsoever you have seen or heard of in all your life, is nothing to it.

Bioph. Puh ! Who would have expected Foreign News after such a Preface ? and all but some Island of Pines, I warrant you ! Or suppose it should be true, what can it be to us ? however go on, *Sebastian*, perhaps it may afford us some diversion.

Sebast. I prefaged what entertainment my News would have with you : What can it be to us, say you ? Why, when you understand all, you will bless your self that there is such a place in the World, which you may go to if you please, where you may find retreat from all troubles at home, and be happy beyond imagination ; nay, let me tell you, you must, you will go to it if you love your self.

Bioph. You speak at a strange rate, *Sebastian*, a man would think you were either strangely imposed upon your self, or else that you had very mean apprehensions of our discretion : But let it suffice to say, That, soberly speaking, there is no Country upon the face of the Earth can deserve this *Encomium* ; besides, when all is said that can be said, every mans own home is his best Country.

Sebast. Why, do you not understand me ? This which I am speaking of, is or will be your home too, at least if you will but take the pains to travel thither.

Biophil. I marry, thank you for that ; but I wist it is better to believe than to go look in this Case. What ! change my Native Country, transplant my self at these years ! No, I
am

am too old, and have taken too deep root where I am, for that.

Phil. Assure your self, *Biophilus*, there is something extraordinary that *Sebastian* expresses himself thus; He is no Hypochondriack nor whimsical Enthusiast, but a man of the dryest and best tempered understanding.

Biophil. I have always thought no less, which raises my wonder now: Come, pray you, *Sebastian*, tell us plainly what you have to say upon good grounds concerning this place which you are in such a rapture about.

Sebast. In earnest, Sir, I have to say all that is possible to be said, and much more than I can express.

Bioph. So it seems; for I perceive you are so full of it, you cannot vent your self; we must therefore broach you by degrees. In the first place let me ask you, What is the Name of this strange Country?

Sebast. It is called *Urania*.

Bioph. A Romantick Name! But, I pray you, in what Longitude and Latitude is it situate; that a man may know where to find it, if he should have a mind to go thither?

*An Allegorical
Description of the
new Country.*

Sebast. I am not skilful in that kind of learning, neither do I remember that it was told me in those terms how the Country lies, but perhaps this may tend to your satisfaction; I am assured that they have no night nor darkness there, for the Sun never goes off their Horizon, nor are there any long Evenings and tedious Nights, which we complain of in *England*; by this Character I suppose you may guess at the latitude of the place.

Bioph.

126 *A Second Winter-Evening*

Bioph. Well, I will consider of that at leisure, in the mean time tell us what is said to be the temper of the Air?

Sebast. O Sir, the Air is sweet and temperate beyond compare; it is *Aether* rather than Air, there is neither violent heat nor cold, no distinction of Summer and Winter, and indeed no such things, but a perpetual Spring; so that Flowers blossom, and Fruit ripen all the Year long; and by reason of this serenity and constancy of the Air, the Country is so healthful, that there is never any epidemical or raging Disease, no man feeble and languishing, nay, not so much as wrinkles or grey hairs upon any mans head or face, infomuch, that you would think the Inhabitants were all absolutely immortal.

Bioph. If that one thing alone be true, I warrant you the Country wants no People.

Sebast. O very populous, yet by reason of its prodigious fruitfulness it can never be overstockt; for, they say, it yields a fresh Harvest of all kind of Fruits every Month, and that a most abundant one; forasmuch as no Weeds, nor Thorns and Bryars grow there, but only that which is good for the use of man, and, which is most of all wonderful, all this is brought forth spontaneously, without the toil and labour of man.

They say also there are no kind of wild Beasts there, either to affright and annoy the people, or to devour the Fruits of the Land; nay, not so much as any Serpents, or other venomous Creatures or troublesome Insects, and all this is owing to the clemency of the Air, the peculiar nature of the Soil, together with Gods Blessing upon both.

Bioph.

Bioph. I perceive a man may eat well, and when he hath so done may sleep in a whole Skin there, that I like; and I would to God it were not a Romance which you give us: But go on, *Sebastian*, what is the Polity and Government of the Country?

Sebast. The Government is perfectly Monarchical, and the Prince is absolute; yet I do not hear that any of his Subjects wear wooden Shooes, or feed upon Cabbage, but all of them enjoy their liberty and property as securely and fully as in any Commonwealth in the World.

There is no squabbling about Priviledges, no interfering between Prerogative and Immunities, Dominion and Common Right; the King commands what he will, and the people willingly obey him: for his Wisdom and Goodness moderate his Will and Power better than all the Boundaries of written Laws.

And this I am informed of too, that though there be several Degrees of Subjects, as there are amongst us, because otherwise there could be no sufficient encouragement to industry, nor no capacity in the Prince to set marks of favour upon those that deserve extraordinarily of him; yet from hence arise no emulations amongst the Nobility, nor any oppression of the Commons; the people do not envy and murmur against the Great Ones, nor on the other side do they as greater Fish devour the lesser.

Bioph. A rare temper of Government this! and not less admirable than that of the Air you spake of before: You amuze me strangely. But what are the staple Commodities of the Country?

Sebast.

Sebast. As for that, you must know it is not with *Urania* as with most other Countries, where usually one Province abounds with what another wants, and the other needs what that can spare; and so there is a necessity of reciprocal Interchange between them, both to relieve their necessities mutually, and to discharge their superfluities; and herein you know lyes both the reason of Trade, and the security of Alliances between several Countries in our Parts of the World. But now *Urania* being (as was wont to be said of *Egypt*) a Country self-sufficient, depends not at all upon Foreign Commerce; and therefore as it needs nothing from abroad, so consequently it sends out few or none of those Commodities it abounds with; but rather (as I shall tell you by and by) invites Foreigners to come over to them, and reside amongst them, and so to partake freely of the advantages of that happy Land.

Yet I must tell you, they have very great rarities in those Parts, and such as are exceedingly desired by all other people that understand the worth of them; as in particular, to specify some few which are not at all to be found any where else.

In the first place, they have the true *Elixir Vitæ*, a very precious Balm, far beyond that of *Gilead*, that perfectly cures all Diseases, both inward and outward, I had almost said of body and mind. This operates without any pain to the Patient, and in outward applications, heals all kind of wounds, and leaves no scar or mark behind it.

They have also an admirable Water, which so quickens all the Senses, and peculiarly the
Sight

sight, that a man by the help of it shall see further than by a Telescope, and pierce into the very Secrets of Nature.

The common Food of the Country is somewhat answerable to the description of *Manna*, and hath that peculiar taste which every man affects, and satisfies all the powers of Nature. They have also a delicious Wine called *Lachryma Christi*, which amongst other Vertues makes men forget all sorrows whatsoever: And this they usually drink in an Amethyst Cup, which preserves them from Surfeits or Intemperance, what proportions soever they drink.

Amongst the rest, they have a sort of *Nitre*, so very powerful and absterfivè, that it takes away all spots, blemishes and aspersions, and makes those that use it so very beautiful, that they ravish the Eyes of Beholders.

It were endless to go about to enumerate the Commodities of this Country, which clearly outgoes the Holy Land, though it was said that in *Solomon's* days Gold and Silver were there as common as the Stones of the Street: And for proof of it, the Inhabitants are generally so rich and prosperous, that there is not one poor man in the whole Land, not one to be found, that doth need or will ask an Alms. The hungry and naked, those grievous Spectacles (too sadly common in most other places) are not to be seen there; of which, amongst other causes, these are assigned, *viz.* there is no sordid and cruel *Miser* there, who hoards up what others should live upon; nor is there any wasteful Glutton or Epicure, who devours his own and others Folks Portion too. In short, they say all desirable things are there in such abundance,

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that

that every man is as rich, as full, and as happy as he pleases.

Bioph. If all this was possible to be true, which I must beg your pardon to declare I have not faith enough to believe, yet the felicity of this Country could not be long-liv'd; for it will certainly derive upon it self the envy of all its Neighbours: and the effect of that will be, that those who have the best Iron will quickly become Masters of all this Wealth.

Sebast. Nay, *Biophilus*, as for that there is no danger; for the Country is altogether inaccessible, save only by one narrow way, and that is so well guarded and defended, that to this day no Enemy hath ever had the confidence to assault it. And besides all, the Inhabitants are in such perfect peace and amity one with another, and maintain so inviolably their allegiance towards their Sovereign, that as no Foreigner hath any encouragement to enterprize upon them by treachery, so neither can he without mighty folly think himself considerable enough to prevail by force against such an united strength.

Bioph. Now you speak of that, I pray give me leave to ask you one Question more, What is the humour of the people, both amongst themselves, and towards Strangers?

Sebast. That is as admirable in its kind as any thing I have told you yet. The Complexion of the people is said to be universally sanguine, and consequently they are sprightly and cheerful, ingenious and complaisant, open-hearted and yet grave, without fraud and without jealousy; they neither intend any hurt, nor do they suspect any. Amongst other Instances

stances of their sedate cheerfulness, they are exceedingly addicted to Musick, and their Songs are observed to be composed for the most part in praise of their Prince, the splendour of his Court, the Glory of his Achievements, and the Felicity of his Reign.

So far are they from wrath and choler, that in the memory of man there hath not been one Law-Suit commenced amongst them; and, which is more, not one Theological Disputation, which usually are attended with so much heat and animosity in these Parts of the World. But as for Tale-Bearers, Whisperers, Backbiters, and all that melancholy and envious Brood, there is not one of them to be found in all the Country; every man there loves his Neighbour as himself, and is as tender of his interest and reputation as of his own.

And then for their temper and carriage towards Strangers, they are infinitely civil and obliging: They deride not other mens habit, or mien, or language, or customs, or complexions; but contrariwise, whensoever any such come amongst them, they welcome them heartily, treat them with all instances of Hospitality, and by all possible obligations and indearments invite them to become one people with themselves, and as much as in them lies are ready to contribute their assistance towards their Voyage.

Bioph. This is a very strange Relation as ever I heard in my life: But in plain English it is too good to be true. All this can amount to no more than to some *Utopia* or new *Atlantis*. Pardon my freedom, good *Sebastian*; I acknowledge you a wise and a learned Gentle-

man, that Character all the World allows you, but in this particular Story some Body hath unworthily abused your good nature; for it can be no better than a Fiction, a Legend, a mere Flamm.

Sebast. You do not ordinarily think a man bound to warrant the News he tells you, but you us'd to be contented to take it as he hath it; and I am sure you will not allow me to prescribe to you what

Sebastian relates the grounds of the credibility of his Story.

you shall believe: however, I assure you upon the word of a Gentleman and a Christian, I have not devised it of my own head, but am as well satisfied of the truth and reality of the Relation I have made to you, as it is possible for me to be of any thing which I have not seen with my Eyes; and I am very confident I have as good grounds for my perswasion, as it is fit for a discreet man to require in such a Case.

Bioph. I wish you could satisfie me as well; I pray therefore do us the favour to let us know what probabilities you go upon in this matter.

Sebast. They say we English-men (above all people) love to be cheated, and encourage impostures by our credulity: But if that be the humour of our Country-men, I must beg their pardon if I a little vary from them in that Particular. I confess I am not so ill-natured as to suspect that every Body I converse with hath designs upon me; nor yet am I so supinely soft and credulous, as to be at every Bodies mercy; or so greedy of News, as to swallow all that comes without chewing. And as to the business before us, I positively affirm to you, I had
this

this strange Relation (as you esteem it) from one that came from the place, and was an Eye-witness of what he reported, and therefore could not be deceived himself in what he related : And then his Quality was such, as that he could have no interest to impose upon me therein ; for he was no less a man than the only Son of the Great Monarch of the Country, and he came as Ambassadour Extraordinary from the King his Father, on purpose to invite and incline our people to participate of that happy Region, and of all the admirable advantages aforesaid, and assured us, That all which came should be free Denizons of *Urania*.

Bioph. I. Good *Sebastian*, he told you so ; but how are you sure he was not an Impostor ; and designed to put tricks upon you and our good-natured Country-men ?

Sebast. As for that, his very Person and Mien spake for him, both which were so August and Grand, as that no mean man could bear out the Port he used : besides this, he came not in a clancular way, but made his Publick Entry, and his Train and Equipage was Grave and Majestick, like himself, far beyond the empty pomp and pageantry of a Counterfeit. His Commission and Letters Credential also were publickly seen, read and allowed ; and they were sealed with such a Seal, as no wit of man could imitate or counterfeit.

Add unto all this, I have seen the Map or Chart of the Country, I have perused the Digest of the Laws of the Kingdom, these Eyes have read the Records of their History, and with this mouth I have tasted the delicious fruits

of the Land. What would you have more to justify the matter of fact?

Biophil. What would I have more? Why, I think you venture too great a Stock in one Bottom; I would not trust to any one man, whatsoever he were, in a relation of this nature; I should require to see and speak with many about it before I would believe it.

Sebast. You say well; But can you think it reasonable to require that so great a Prince should send many Ambassadors on such an Errand, when he aims not at his own Greatness, or the accommodating of his own Affairs, nor hath any need of our alliance and assistance; but merely designs our benefit? Or can you expect that he should send every day fresh Envoys, and that not only to whole Countries, but to every individual person too? And if you could imagine such a Prince should condescend to this also, can you think it would be easie to find many fit persons for such a purpose, who would be willing to forsake the Glories of such a Court, or the contentments of home in such a Region, and to expose themselves to the difficulties and hazards of Travel, as well as to the change of Air and Diet, and a thousand other inconveniences attendant upon such an Expedition? No, *Biophilus*, it was an instance of wonderful Goodness, that such a Prince should send one Ambassador on such an Errand, and admirable Charity and self-denial in him that undertook and performed it.

Bioph. You speak reason, I must acknowledge, in that Particular; but yet I can never believe, that if there were any such Country as your Intelligence amounts to, it should lye undiscovered

to

to these Parts of the World until now. What! *Drake, Candish, Columbus, Davis,*—— none of them in all their Travels take notice of such a Place, nor give the least intimation of it until now.

Sebast. That is no such strange thing as you make it, if you call to mind how long a time it was before the World would believe there were *Antipodes*, and yet it is plain that so long one full half of the World was unknown to the other. Or if you remember, that time was, (and that not an ignorant Age neither) when the Roman Empire was thought to embrace the whole Earth, which as now we are certain took not in one fifth (perhaps not one tenth) of it. Do you not know, that *Hercules's* Pillars were accounted the Boundaries of humane Travels, and that for a great many Ages both the torrid and frigid Zones (as they are called) were esteemed uninhabitable, and all that time the World was ignorant of it self? besides, you know, it is not very long since those vast Tracts of Land, the *West Indies*, were first discovered by some of those persons you have named; and, to say no more, I pray how many Ages past over the heads of Mankind before this our Native Country of *Britain* (as considerable as it is, and we justly esteem it) came into any knowledge or consideration with the rest of the World: think it not strange therefore if *Urania* was so lately discovered.

Bioph. But that which I principally intended to say was this, You afford me matter of great wonder, that you should be so much concerned for a place very newly discovered (if it be discovered) but especially that you should be-

lieve so many strange things of it, before any one person hath gone from hence, and returned hither again to confirm those reports of it.

Sebast. Ifs and Exceptions are endless, and I know no way to make a man believe that hath no mind to it; yet I will give you all the satisfaction I am able, and that which I think is sufficient in such a Case. You must know therefore that this Country hath not been wholly undiscovered till now, as you suppose; for I myself have seen a Book of great Authority and Antiquity, which though somewhat obscurely and figuratively written, yet certainly pointed at such a place, and in some measure described it too, to him that attentively read and considered it. And besides, there are some very credible relations concerning some certain persons, that have heretofore made very fortunate Voyages thither.

But as to that you object, that no man hath gone from hence thither, and returned again to us to bring us the Tydings; you will easily satisfy your self therein, if you consider what I intimated before, *viz.* That those who once get thither can have no inclinations to make a Change so much to their disadvantage, as it must needs be for them to return hither again. Besides, though they say the passage is not very long thither, yet it is no common Road; and therefore very few will (at least unnecessarily) undertake it.

*Preparations for
the Journey to U-
rania.*

Phil. But if it be an untraced Path, how shall a man find the way thither, if he have a mind to go?

Sebast. O *Philander*, there is no great difficulty

culty in that, if a man be well resolved on the business; for besides a Chart, and very punctual instructions which the Ambassador left behind him for that purpose when he was amongst us, there are great store of very skilful and faithful Guides and Pilots, who freely offer their service, and will not fail with God's Blessing to land us safe there.

Phil. I cannot tell what *Biophilus* thinks of this business: But for my part, *Sebastian*, I am so ravished with your relation, that if there be such a place in the World I will find it out by God's help. I thank God I am no Male-Content, either with my Native Country, or my private Fortunes; yet I see no reason we should like Mushromes live and die upon the same spot, and be a mere *accessio Soli*, or Heir-comes to the place where we happened to be born, especially if we may thus much mend our selves by the change. I am a Citizen of the World, and that shall be my Country where I can fare best.

But will you go with me, *Sebastian*? Then I shall not only be out of all doubt of the truth of your Narrative, when I see you so far believe it your self, as to adventure all upon it; but I shall with much more cheerfulness change my Country, when I do not change my Friend, nor forego your Company.

Sebast. Obligingly spoken, and bravely resolved, *Philander*: By God's Grace I will go with you; and to assure you of my intentions, I will now acquaint you that I have been this good while in setting things in order, and in making preparations for the Voyage.

Phil. But how shall we dispose of our Estates here?

here? And what Commodities had we best to furnish our selves with to carry over with us?

* *Sebast.* As for the disposal of our present Fortunes, I can tell you there are very sure Returns betwixt this Country and that; for the Prince himself will be your security, if you put your Effects into such hands as he hath appointed. But as for Mercandice to carry with us, there will be no need of that; for the Country which we have in our eye is so gloriously rich and plentiful, the Prince is so noble and benign, and all the Inhabitants so kind and charitable, that we shall be sure as soon as ever we come there to be furnished *gratis* with all that our hearts can wish: and moreover, if we should put our selves to the trouble of transporting our Baggage with us, it would not only incumber us in our Journey, but would also seem to be such mere trash and lumber when we come there, that we should be ashamed of it and of our selves too, for setting such a value upon it.

But there is another thing, and much more material, which I must needs tell you of, in order to our more favourable reception when we come there, that is, we must before-hand quite alter our Habit and Garb, and not so much as smell of the Earth we came from: amongst other things, we must disuse our selves from Onions and Garlick, and from Flesh too, that we may the easier accord with the Diet of the Country; and we must refine our Spirits, that we may be fit to breathe in that pure Air; and having so done, there needs no more but to carry with us great minds and large Souls, to qualifie us both for the Society and the enjoyments there.

Phil.

Phil. Thank you, Dear Friend and Fellow-Traveller (for so I will henceforward style you) for these instructions: I will use the best of my endeavours to be fitted accordingly: But is there any thing else that I need to be advised in?

Sebast. O yes, there is one thing more which I doubt you do not think of, and I am somewhat afraid lest the mention of it should discourage you; but it must be, and there is no avoiding it.

Phil. In the name of God, what is it? Mistrust not my courage or constancy; I'll stick at nothing that crosses my way to *Urania*.

Sebast. You remember I have intimated to you already, that when we come at the Country we design, we shall be immortal, we can never dye afterwards; but we must dye beforehand, or we shall never come thither. This is the pinch of the business, what think you of it now, *Philander*?

Phil. Never the worse for that, Fellow-Traveller: But, Good Lord! what a Dream have I been in all this while? I thought verily you had spoken Historical truth of some rare Earthly Country: but now my eyes are open, and I perceive you mean Heaven, that's the *Urania* you have all this while amuzed us with: Now I can unriddle the whole business: I have now a Clue to guide me through the maze of your Discourse, and can decypher all the Figures you have used. I am sure 'tis Heaven only can answer the Character you have given; that is the place where there is no pain, sickness, nor death; there is no Night nor darkness, but a perpetual Day; there is to be found the true Balsome that cures all the Distempers and wounds

wounds both of Body and Mind ; there are to be had all the other Rarities which you have mentioned ; *Jesus Christ* is the Ambassador from God Almighty, that invites us thither ; all is plain and easie now ; how dull was I, that I could not understand you sooner !

Bioph. And have you drolled with us all this while, *Sebastian* ? Have you wheedled me back again into the Subject I declined ? Is your famous *Urania* in another World ? I thought your News was impossible to be true, and now you as good as confess it.

Sebast. By your pardon, *Biophilus*, have I done you any wrong ? You ask'd for News, and I have told you good and true News ; News of more importance, and more comfortable than any the Coffee-House affords ; not ill-natured Stories of Whigg and Tory, nor surmises about *France* and *Italy*, Turk and Count *Teckley* ; but a great truth of a Kingdom that cannot be shaken, a Kingdom wherein there is righteousness and justice, unity and joy, love and good-will, everlasting peace and everlasting life ; a state of that felicity, that it is able to make us weary of this World, and to render the time of our life tedious to us till we come to the enjoyment of it ; in a word, that is sufficient to make all the ways of Vertue seem easie and delectable, and even Death it self desirable in the way thither.

What think you of it, *Philander*, now you understand what Country it is I perswaded you to ? Doth your mind hold for the Voyage ? Will you go on with your preparations for it, as we were discoursing before ? Will you venture to shoot the Gulph that you may arrive at it ?

Phil.

Phil. Yes, Fellow-Traveller, I hold my resolution. For though I find I was mistaken in the particular, yet not in the general; it was an Earthly Paradise that I had in my thoughts all the while you were discoursing figuratively to us, and I had no other apprehensions of your design, and therein *Biophilus* was more in the right than I, who was confident there could be no such Country in this World as you described: but I heartily thank you for the deception; you have cheated us into our own advantage. And now that I understand you, I do not change my Course, though I change my Port; I hope I shall not be so absurd, as to be more in earnest for an Earthly Country than for an Heavenly.

Philander transported with the contemplation of Heaven.

Who would not gladly be at everlasting rest, and in an unchangeable Condition? We are but *Pilgrims and Strangers in this World*, but there we shall be at home, and in our Father's House; here we are continually tossed with Winds and Seas, tormented betwixt hopes and fears; there we come into harbour, and shall be safe as upon a Rock, stable and settled as the Mountains.

Who can chuse but wish to live for ever, and would not be contented to die once, that he might be out of the reach of Chance or danger for ever after? Everlasting Life! what an Ocean of joy and felicity is contained in it! It puts me into an Ecstasie to think of it! Surely he doth not love himself, or doth not understand himself, who would not gladly leave an uncertain, troublesome, quarrelsome, foolish, disputing, suspicious, envious World, upon
far

far easier terms than the attainment of it. But to live with the Ever-Blessed Jesus, to spend Eternity in the Society of good and wise, kind and peaceable men, to enter into everlasting friendships, inviolable peace, unchangeable felicity ! I am ravished and transported with the thoughts of it.

When once I had the happiness to take notice of a poor man, blind from his Mother's Womb, who never had seen the Sun, nor could have any Notion of Beauty or Colours, nor of any of that variety of delightful Objects which the eye and light present to us, and entertain us with ; when afterwards (I say) by a strange Cure this poor man had his eyes opened, and found a Crowd of new delights press in upon him, he thought himself surrounded with Miracles, and was almost distracted with wonder. And certainly no less, but a great deal more, will our surprize be when we come to Heaven, where probably we shall have new Powers opened, which shall discover such Glories to us as we were not capable of perceiving before, if they had been presented to us ; but most certainly we shall then have new Objects of delight to entertain those Powers we have, and those transcendent to all we ever had experience of before.

Or when I think of the Children of *Israel* first coming out of *Egypt*, where they had lived for some hundreds of years in the Condition of Slaves, under the jealous eye of a barbarous Prince, treated with hardship and severity, and exposed to all the indignities, insolences and cruelty of a faithless and ingrateful people ; and then after this, (leaping as we say out of
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the Frying Pan into the Fire) were carried into a vast and howling WilderNESS, and there spending forty years more amidst Seas and Mountains, in danger of Wild Beasts, and beset with Enemies, having no City of refuge, no Strong Holds, no Friends, no Allies, no comfort or supplies, but from hand to mouth; when (I say) these poor people arrived at last at the Promised Land, the Land of *Canaan*, a Land of Olive-yards and Vine-yards, a Land flowing with Milk and Honey, and the Glory of all Lands, and found themselves peaceably possess'd of it, under their own God, their own Prince, and their own Laws, and flowing in such plenty of all good things, that they now became the admiration and envy of all their Neighbours, who had been the Subject of their contempt and scorn before: I can but phansie how they were astonished at the change, what a wonder they were to themselves; and I am apt to believe, that for some time after they could not but suspect they were under a pleasant illusion of phancy, and that all their felicity was no better than a Dream.

So assuredly, when we shall first come to Heaven, our spiritual *Canaan*, to the enjoyment of an happiness of God's preparing, who hath all the Ingredients of felicity in his power, and infinite Wisdom to contrive and compound them, and unspeakable goodness to bestow them, and who, as the Scripture expresses it, hath from the beginning of the World been designing and preparing such a systeme of joy and felicity as may at once both most delight his Creatures, and display all his aforesaid Attributes; when, I say, we shall first observe the strange change
between

between a narrow, stingy, necessitous, unquiet, sickly, peevish and contentious World, which we have left behind us, and the settlement and peace, plenty and glory of that we enter upon; it will not be easie for us (without larger minds than we have now) to know how to behave our selves; we shall be apt to be oppress'd with wonder, and, if it were possible, to die with excess of joy.

Sebast. You speak bravely and sensibly, Dear *Phil.* You seem to have gone up to Mount *Nebo*, and to have fed your Eyes with the prospect of the Holy Land; but have you considered the difficulties of the way, as well as the happiness of the Journies end? Will you not like the Israelites (you spake of even now) repent, and bethink your self of turning back when you encounter difficulty or danger? Will not Death affright you when it appears in all its dismal pomp? Will you not shrink when you shall come to be stript naked of all your Wordly Habiliments? Will you not have a lingring after your old accommodations, your fine House, rich Furniture, pleasant Gardens, sprightly Wines, or any other pleasures and entertainments of the Body?

Phil. No, no, *Sebastian*, I will go to Heaven, whatever come of it; what can discourage a man when Heaven is at Stake? If the Journey put me to a little trouble, there is rest at the end of it. What is it to exercise a little patience, when a man shall be crowned at last? Who would not run, strive, do or suffer any thing, and venture all upon such a wager?

Shall I be frighted with Death? that will come

come however, and I am sure the neglecting eternal life is not the way to escape it. *Christian Resolution.*

Shall I be solicitous for my estate and worldly accommodations, when I know, whether I go to Heaven or no, I must shortly leave them all behind me? And surely if they cannot save me from death, they ought not to hinder me of Eternal Life.

Or shall I hanker after Onions and Garlick, and the Flesh-Pots of *Egypt*, as you called the pleasures of the Body, which will certainly forsake me, if I do not forsake them first. No, I have counted the cost, there is nothing shall discourage me by the grace of God, I will go to Heaven; but I pray let us not part Company, let us go to Heaven together.

Sebast. With all my heart, dear Friend; for though I doubt we must not expect much Company with us, yet perfect solitude is somewhat uncomfortable, and there are great advantages of Society. For

if any body should be so absurd as to laugh at us on our Journey, we can the better despise them. If either of us should happen to be heavy and weary in our way, we may animate and quicken one another. If any difficulty beset, that may be too hard for any one of us, by our united strength we may be able to encounter and remove it. If either of us should swerve a little out of the narrow way, towards the right hand or towards the left, the other may recal and rectify him. Besides, the great additional comfort it will be when we come at our Journeys end, not only that we see one another happy,

*The advantages
of good Company
in the way to
Heaven.*

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and

and enjoy one anothers Society, but especially when we reflect upon the good service we have done to one another in bringing each other thither, we shall have our joys redoubled by the reflection, and feel not only our own individual shares, but that also of each other.

Phil. Happily thought of, Fellow-Traveller, but will not *Biophilus* go with us too: what say you, Sir?

Bioph. You are honest Gentlemen, and my good Friends; but, Lord, what Romances do you make, what Castles do you build in the Air, and what shadows do you feed your selves withal! You talk of

Scepticism displaying its humour, and checked by sober reason.

Heaven as confidently as if you had travelled an hundred times through all the Regions of it, or rather indeed as if you had visited the World in the Moon. But when all is done, did ever you or any body else see such a place as Heaven. For Gods sake therefore leave these Enthusiastical whimsies, and talk like men, speak of something that is certain and visible, or probable at least, and do not forego substance for shadows, certainties for uncertainties.

Phil. God help you, good Neighbour, in requital of the caution you give us: assure your self, we have the same senses and the same self-love that you have, and only wish you had the same Faith that we have. We are not willing to part with certainties for uncertainties; for if Heaven be not certain, we are sure nothing else is. And as for the things of this World, they are so far from it, that nothing is more certain, than that we must part with them shortly, whether we will or no: But as for the other

other World, *we know whom* we have believed.

Bioph. I tell you, all is but dream and phancy, there is no proof in the World for it. All you have to say is, that men must believe; as if you should say, shut your Eyes and see, you perswade a man to find the way to Heaven blindfold. No, give me good proof, or I'll not stir a foot; with me seeing is believing.

Phil. Remember your self, good Neighbour, are not you a Christian? Do not you believe that Jesus Christ came from Heaven on purpose to make discovery to us of those celestial Regions, and to shew us the way thither? And did not he confirm his report to us by undeniable Miracles? Did he not come into the World miraculously, and return thither again visibly? Did he not from thence send down admirable tokens of his Presence and Authority there, especially on the famous day of Pentecost? Besides, do you not see all wise men provide for another World, and that generally good and virtuous men, when they come to die, are ravished with joy in contemplation of it, as if they really saw Heaven open to receive them?

Bioph. Whether or no I believe as much as you do, yet I believe this one thing instead of all the rest, that we are born to be cheated. For what with the illusions of our own melancholy phancies, what by the prejudices of our Education, and the imperious dictates of others, what by the authority of unaccountable Tradition, and publick Fame, and what by the designs of Politicians, it is an hard matter to know what else to believe.

Phil. Indeed, *Biophilus*, I am both sorry and ashamed to hear you talk at this rate. And I

do not wonder now, that you were so desirous to decline this kind of Discourse when we fell upon it. I hope you take me for your Friend as well as your Neighbour, and *Sebastian* here for a discreet and worthy Gentleman, suffer your self to be perswaded by us to think and speak more soberly and becoming your self in these great matters, or if you will not think like a Christian, yet talk like a man; for let me tell you, you seem not only to reject Christianity, but all Religion in general, and upon those terms you will be as little fit for this World as for that which is to come.

For what a sad Creature is a man of no Religion at all? What State or Civil Government will be able to endure him, whom no Oaths can oblige or fasten upon? How can there be any Civil Society with him that hath no Faith, that can neither trust nor be trusted? What security can such a man give that he shall not disturb the State, violate the person of his Prince, falsify his trust, betray his Friend, cut his Neighbours throat, if he be under the awe of no God, the expectation of no rewards nor punishments in another World? What security can there be, I say, in dealing with such a man, what sincerity in his Friendship, what safety in his Neighbourhood? For all these depend upon the reverence of Religion, which he that is wholly destitute of, must needs become *devorum caput*, a Wolfs Head, the pest and vermine of humane Society.

Do not therefore, dear *Biophilus*, at once both stile your own Conscience, and affront the common sense and reason of Mankind. Do not under the pretence of being more witty and sagacious than other men, reason your self
into

into brutality, and whilst you grow over-wise in your own Eyes, be the most fatally mistaken and lost for ever.

Why should you abandon your self to desperation, and leave your self without any refuge in adversity : we are well and chearful here at present, God be thanked ; but the time will come when God will stand us in stead , when we shall have need of the retreats and comforts of Religion. Above all things in the World, leave not your self without hope in your latter end, do as becometh a man of your parts and discretion, suspect your own suspicions, and let not the opinion you have, that other men are under prejudices, prejudice you against the arguments for believing. Come deal ingenuously, and open your Breast, propound the grounds of your suspicions, the objections you have against Religion ; and though I cannot promise you that I will answer them all to your satisfaction , yet I doubt not but here is one that will.

Bioph. Look you, Gentlemen , you put me into a great strait ; for if upon this invitation of yours, I do not disclose my mind to you, I shall seem disingenuous , and you will think worse of me than perhaps I deserve ; and on the other side, if I do discover my sentiments, it is probable, that my Creed will fall so many Articles short of yours, that we shall break out into some heats, and endanger the continuance of our Neighbourly conversation. However since it seems to be your desire, I will be plain with you, in confidence, that as you are Gentlemen, you will deal ingenuously with me, and if you can do me no good, you will do me

no hurt ; my meaning is, that if it should happen you do not convince my reason, I hope you will not defame my person, nor expose me to the insolencies of the Rabble, who believe in gross and by whole Sale, and throw dirt upon all that chew what they swallow.

*The Epicurean
Cried.*

Now in the first place, that you may not think me a perfect Sceptick, I declare to you, that I acknowledge the Being of a God, and that not only because the generality of mankind, and even *Epicurus* himself owned so much, but because it is not conceivable how the World should be without one ; for no wit or reason of man can evince to me, how any thing should begin to be without some necessary and eternal Existent, to begin the motion, and to bring it into Being ; or which is the same thing in effect, there can be no second Cause, if there be no first.

But then beyond this you must pardon me, for to deal sincerely with you, I do not think that this God minds or troubles himself about the World after he hath made it. Much less do I see any sufficient ground for that which *Philander* hath been talking so warmly about, namely, a World to come. And for eternal life (which men speak such great things of) I profess I look upon it as a flat impossibility, for as much as I see men die, but see no foundation for a belief, that there is any life or existence out of a body.

There are some other points of affinity with these that I withhold my assent from ; but because you have challenged me to a rational debate, therefore to give fair play, and to put the

the business between us to an issue, I will insist but upon one point, and that shall be the same which we fell into by chance at our first coming together; namely, whether there be such a thing as a publick Tribunal or general Judgment, where mens actions shall be reviewed and censured after this life. Prove me but this one point sufficiently and plainly, and I will grant you all the rest.

Sebast. Now you shew your self a man, and a shrewd one too, though not a Christian. For I must acknowledg that you have with great judgment pitcht upon the very Cardinal point of Religion: and which, if it be proved (as I do not doubt but it shall be) will infer all the rest; but if it miscarry, all falls with it. The perswasion of a Judgment to come is the great awe upon mens Consciences, the principal motive of virtue and piety, the restraint and check upon vice and wickedness, and indeed the sinew of Civil Government, and bond of humane Society. This both supposes the Being of a God (which you grant) and of a Providence also (which you deny); for if there were not a God, it is evident there could be no Providence in this World, nor Judgment in another: and this, if it be granted or proved, necessarily draws after it rewards and punishments in the life to come; for otherwise a Judgment would be but a matter of curiosity, and a trouble to no purpose. You have therefore, in making choice of this for the critical or decisive point, given great proof of your own sagacity, and put the matter upon a right issue.

The great consequence and general influence of the belief of a Judgment.

Bioph. Well, prove it then.

Sebast. What proof do you require of this? Why should not the testimony of the holy Scripture satisfy you? For in the first place, if there be a God (which you have acknowledged) you cannot but think it reasonable, that if he intend to judge the World, he should give some intimation of it to the Sons of men beforehand, since they must needs be so highly concerned in the knowledge of it, and then in the next place the Scripture cannot be denied to be as exprefs and full in this particular, as it is possible for words to make it. There God declares and confirms it innumerable times, and the more to awaken men to the consideration of it, and preparation for it, he is said to have appointed a set time for it, he hath foretold who shall be the Judge, with what pomp and retinue he shall come attended, what measures he shall proceed by, and what shall be the circumstances of that great solemnity.

Bioph. Excuse me there, *Sebastian*, I am not to be born down by authority, but convinced by reason; if you will do any good upon me, you must deal with me as a Philosopher, not a bigotted person.

Sebast. By your favour, Sir, it is not to impose upon you, to give you Divine Authority for proof. If indeed I should urge you only with the Opinions of men, you might complain I did you wrong; for in such a case your denial would have as much authority as their assertion: but I hope God may be believed upon his own word, especially in a business of this nature, which depends so much upon the determination
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of his will ; for who can tell Gods mind better, than himself? *Who knows the mind of man, but the spirit of a man which is in him?* And who can pretend to declare what God will do, unless he be pleased to reveal his intentions? But if he declare he will judge the World, we may be sure it shall be done.

Bioph. I, but that is the Question, *Sebastian*, how shall I be assured that God hath any such intentions, or hath made any such Declaration?

Sebast. That which we call by the name of holy Scripture, is nothing else but a collection of such Declarations of the mind of the Divine Majesty, as he hath thought fit from time to time to make to the Sons of men. And those Books, which are so called, have been revered by wise men in all Ages upon that account, as such all imaginable care hath been taken to preserve them from corruption or depravation, and several of the best of men have exposed their lives, rather than consent to the destruction of them. Now why should you call in question the Authority of these Books, which you cannot do without impeaching the wisdom of the most able, and the sincerity of the most honest of men, and upon the same terms you derogate from the Faith of all Mankind, and must (if you will be impartial) abrogate the credit of all the old Records in the World. For as much as (besides all other considerations) these Sacred Records, I mean the Books of the Old and New Testament, do bear an irrefragable testimony to each other, and as a pair of Indentures, justify one another. Which you will easily be convinced of, if you consider, that these two Volumes

lumes were written in several very remote Ages, and consequently by persons that could hold no correspondence one with another, and were in the custody of those that were of such contrary interests and opinions, that it was impossible they either would or could conspire together to put a cheat upon the World in them. Now if notwithstanding these two Books (in the circumstances aforesaid) shall verifie one another, so as that whatsoever the Old Testament promises, the New Testament performs, what the one foretold the other represents the accomplishment of; what ground is or can there be to suspect the truth of them? For if several Witnesses, and those of several Countries, and of contrary interests, such as never saw the Faces of one another before, and therefore neither would nor could combine together and contrive their story, and especially being examined apart too, shall notwithstanding jump in the same matter of fact and circumstances a'fo, there is no man so humorfome and abounding in his own sense, but will allow their evidence to be good and substantial; then much more is there very good ground to believe these Books, which have all these advantages, and several other, which I will not insist upon.

Bioph. These are pretty things which you say; but this is not that kind of proof I expected from you: if this be all the satisfaction you can give me, I am where I was.

Sebast. No, *Biophilus*, this is not all I have to say; but I thought fit to remonstrate to you the sufficiency of this kind of proof in it self, which men of your way are apt to make so slight of, and thence to convince you, that those men
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that take up with this alone, are not such soft and credulous people as you are wont to represent them.

But what if I had no other proof but this, I do not find that you are able to reply any thing to it, it is an easier thing to hough at an Argument, than to answer it. Besides, if this way of probation were far less considerable than it is, yet you know that any evidence will serve against none, and the meanest Arguments will carry a cause when there is nothing to be said on the other side. If you could but pretend to prove on your part, that there were no such thing as a Judgment to come, you had then some reason to be strict in your demands of proof from me of what I assert: but in a true balance the least grain or moment in the World will cast the scale when there is nothing against it. Now since you know well enough, you can offer no kind of proof of an assertion contrary to this we have before us, nothing in the Earth but over-wise doubts, grave suspicions, and, perhaps it may not be so, I appeal to your impartial reason, whether it be not more fit to suspect (at least) that it is so where there is some proof of it, than to suspect it is not so where no Argument is given for the negative, nay indeed where none can be given.

Negatives, you know, are hard to prove in general, but especially in such a case as this is: For he that undertakes to prove such a Negative, hath but one of these two ways to do it, viz. either he must affirm, that he hath surveyed the whole state of Nature, and seen all the Causes

It is just prudence to prepare for a day of Judgment, though the evidence were less than it is.

Causes that are in working, and then must assert *de facto*, that there is no such thing upon the Loom as that he denies; and also that he perfectly understands the whole mind and will of God, and that he intends no such thing; or else he must demonstrate by reason, that it is plainly impossible, and a flat contradiction, that any such thing should be: either of which you cannot, without intolerable absurdity, affirm in the present case.

So that, as I said, you have nothing but bare suspicions on your side (whatever Arguments I have on mine.) Now besides the unequal balance of nothing against something, be it never so small, do but consider what strange imprudence it is to adventure so great a stake, as all your interest in another World amounts to, upon a meer *non putâram*; for what if such a thing should happen to prove true at last, what will become of you then, what a sad condition are you cast into!

Wise men are wont to value not only certainties, but also probabilities, and even contingencies also; now seeing it is not impossible but such a thing may be, and it is of infinite consequence, if it should be, there is all the wisdom in the World to be provided for it. You will say, It may not be; but that is all that Infidelity it self can enable you to say, and then sure it is far safer to suppose that it may be, for no hurt can come of that; but the danger is unspeakable on the other side, if it should prove to be true. In a word, in such a case as this is, it is a wise mans part rather to believe upon slight evidence, than to disbelieve upon great presumptions.

Bioph.

Bioph. I am beholden to you for the Friendly caution you give me ; but it is your reasons I expect at this time, and not your advice.

Sebast. Those you shall have presently, and do not think I trifle with you, or decline the proof I promised, because I proceed thus gradually and slowly with you : The true reason whereof is, because I would rather your own prudence should incline you to believe, than that my Arguments should press you to it, and I much more desire that you should be safe, than that I should have the glory of a Victory ; it is only your concern that we go upon, have therefore a little patience that we may rightly understand one another, and since you have refused Scripture-proof, give me leave to ask you particularly what kind of proof you expect of this matter under our consideration.

In the first place, I hope you do not require sensible evidence of a day of Judgment : you were saying even now, that no man had seen Heaven, and therefore you did not believe it. Possibly those words slipped from you unadvisedly, however it is (you know) a thing future which we are now debating about, and sensible proof cannot be required of that without flat contradiction : it is as if a man should desire to see that which confessedly is not to be seen, and that a thing should be that is not, or be and not be at the same time ; you know you cannot have sensible evidence to day that the Sun will rise to morrow ; in short, neither of any thing past nor future, but only of that which is present.

what kind of proof and what measure of evidence is to be expected in the Principles of Religion.

There

There are some men in this Age, and perhaps you may be acquainted with them, who will only appeal to their senses, and accordingly they reject the notion of God and of Spirits, meerly because they can see no such things. Now if I thought this were your Opinion, I must go another way to work than I intended; but if it will content you that I make the point seem reasonable and clear to the Eyes of your mind, though I do not gratify your bodily Eyes with a strange prospect, then I will proceed as I designed.

Bioph. Well, we are agreed for that. I did, I confess, speak of seeing Heaven, but there was no contradiction in that; because if there be any such place, it is supposed to be constantly existent, and therefore may be visible: yet I do not expect to see the Judgment till the time comes, because futures are not to be seen, but foreseen. Go on therefore, and give me rational evidence, and it shall suffice.

Sebast. But there is another thing I desire to be resolved of, namely, what measure or degree of rational evidence you will be satisfied with. The reason of my inquiry is this, some men there are who highly pretend to a readiness to believe upon just grounds, but when it comes to tryal, they are humourfome and captious, they will require such evidence as the nature of the thing cannot admit of (even supposing it to be true) they expect such proof as shall leave no room for cavil and exception, such as a man can find no evasion from, but that will extort an assent from him whether he will or no. Now I must tell you, this is very hard and unreasonable in any case whatsoever, for

as much as the wit of man is fitter to pull down than to build up, and it is the easiest thing in the World to find shifts and cavils, inso much that he must believe very little indeed, that will admit of nothing which some slight objection or other may be made against. God himself hath provided no remedy for contumacy, and such men must go on, and perish without Cure; for no Argument can escape a captious humour.

Besides, if such strict demands of satisfaction were at any time allowable, yet can they by no means be reasonably insisted upon in such a case as this; for if such irresistible evidence were to be had in this matter, there would be no room for virtue, it would then be a necessary action to believe, and no instance of choice, nor any Argument of a virtuous mind? For what can be the praise or rewardableness of doing that which a man cannot chuse but do; or what excellency is there in Faith, when there is no pretence in the World for unbelief?

Therefore all that you can justly and wisely expect in the present case is, that there be sufficient ground given you for a discreet choice, and over-weight enough in one scale to incline the judgment of a prudent man, so far that he shall see it is more reasonable that he believe, than that he do not. This is very properly to be esteemed conviction of our reason; this is the just Standard of prudence, and this is the Principle that wise men govern themselves by in weighty affairs. And indeed, if no man should determine himself to the pursuit of a business until there were no objection, no excuse, colour, or pretence to the contrary, all the noblest

blest projections and most profitable and necessary undertaking of mankind, would be nipped and blasted in the bud.

Bioph. In truth I do not see but your demand is reasonable, and I must yield to you in this particular also.

Sebast. Then I ask no more.

In order to the satisfaction of a mans judgment, he must first come to indifferency.

Phil. Yes, *Sebastian*, let me put you in mind of one thing more, which is, that *Biophilus* will promise you to hold the scales even, otherwise an over-weight in either of them will not be discernable; my meaning is, that he agree to be sincerely indifferent, and willing to believe on the one side as well as on the other: for I have found by my own experience, that whilst a man retains a partial fondness for an Opinion, it is not all the Arguments in the World shall beat him out of it, he will see all that which makes for him as through a magnifying Glass, and so think it great and considerable, and contrariwise all that which is against him shall seem little and despicable. But when a man comes to this pass, that he is content one side should be true as well as the other, then (and not till then) the best reason will carry it. Therefore unless you premise this, you will strive against the stream, and dispute in vain.

Sebast. Thank you heartily for that, *Philander*. It is very true, *Biophilus*, that if you oppose resolution and prejudice against the discourse I am to make to you, that will be Armor of proof against all the Arguments that can be brought, and then we had as good stay here as go further and lose our labour.

But

But why, good *Biophilus*, should you not lie as fair towards the Doctrine which I am asserting, as towards the contrary?

Nay, why should you not look upon it as greatly your interest, that there should be another World, and a Judgment at the

It is greatly a mans interest that Religion should be true.

end of this? It is certain, you and all of us must dye, there is no peradventure in that, and it were a most sad and dismal thing to think of it, if death put an utter end to a man, so that all his comforts and all his hopes expire with him. And I wonder in my heart how any man can think of death with any measure of patience upon those terms; and that it doth not make him sullen and melancholy all the days of his life. You will say he must yield to necessity; but that is a remedy worse than the Disease (if it be possible) to seek a cure for death in desperation; to tell me there is a necessity of dying, is only to tell me there is no help in the case, which is the very thing I complain of.

And this consideration is so much the more sharp and cutting, by how much the more a mans life hath been pleasant and comfortable. As for a man that hath all his life time been oppressed with Calamities, pinched with Poverty, covered with obloquy, or afflicted with horrible pains, &c. it may seem easie to him to dye, that so he may have that rest in the grave which he could not have above ground; and though he thinks he shall be sensible of no comfort there, yet he shall fare as well as other men in that state. But for him that hath had good treatment in the World, pleasant accommodations, tempting fortunes and enjoyments,

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for such a man to think of Death, which will spoil him of all his Ornaments, and level him with the dust, that will interrupt all his delights, put an end to all his designs and projections, and draw a dark veil over all his glories: I say, if such a man hath nothing to comfort him against Death, if there be no life after this, but a man must for ever forsake and be forsaken of all his felicities, I cannot see how he can possibly avoid an unspeakable abhorrence of it: nay, that's not all neither; for methinks it should render all his present enjoyments not only insipid and loathsome, but even a very torment to him whilst he is in the midst of them.

Now why should any man resist the only remedy in this case, the only consolatory against the summ of all calamities, which is the hopes of another life? Why should he be willing to dye as the Beast dies, and to abandon himself to the grave to rottenness and oblivion? It were certainly better never to have been born, than both to live in perpetual fear of dying, and being dead, to be as if a man had never lived; better never to have tasted the sweets of life, than to be only tantalized, and by that time he begins to live, to begin to die, and then be Eternally deprived of what he just had a smack and a sight of.

Nay farther yet, if a man had lived only like a Beast, it had been no great matter to dye like a Beast: If, I say, a man lookt no farther than his fodder, had no sense of any thing but eating and drinking, and had a Soul in him that served only for salt to keep the body from putrefaction, so that he never lookt about him, made no improvement of himself; and had no
designs

designs in his head, it were less matter if he returned to the Earth, which (like a Mole) he did nothing but root in and turn over whilst he was upon it. But for a man of an active Soul, of improved parts, of reason and wisdom and usefulness, to be smothered in the Grave, so that all his Notions and Discoveries, all Arts and Sciences, nay, all his Vertues and Gallantry of mind, all his hopes and designs shall be abruptly broken off and buried in Oblivion; this is so sad and dismal a thing, that it is able to discourage all study and industry, all care and culture of a mans self; for why should I strive to live like a man, if I must die like a Beast? Why should I take pains to know, when *by increasing knowledge, I should but increase my sorrow?* For as much as the more I know, the more I shall feel my self miserable, and indeed become guilty of my own torment: so that if there were no hopes after this present life, it would be a more adviseable course for a man to abandon himself to the most dark and squalid Barbarism, rather than to weary and wear out himself in the quest of knowledge, and better never to apply himself to any study, or to bestow any pains or cost upon himself, nay indeed, if it were possible, it were desirable never to know any thing, or to think at all. For why should a man put a cheat upon himself? Why should he take not only unprofitable, but vexatious pains? In a word, why should he not so live as he must die? To all which add, that if there were indeed no other World nor Life hereafter; and if there be any man that can find in his heart to be fond of living upon those terms, he must of necessity be a pitiable slave

whilst he continues here ; the perpetual fears of death cramping him, and keeping him in continual bondage, that he shall not have the spirit or courage to dare to do any brave action ; but contrariwise he will be unavoidably tempted to be a wretched Coward and base Fellow, and become a sordid Parasite, to flatter and humour every body meerly upon the account of self-preservation.

Why therefore should any man be fond of such an uncomfortable, nay, such a sottish and debasing opinion ? Why should not a man chuse rather to erect his own mind, and be willing to hope well of himself by cherishing an expectation, that he may survive his body, and live eternally ?

Bioph. There is no question, *Sebastian*, but that living for ever is very desirable, if a man could hope for such a thing absolutely, and not clogged with conditions. As for death it self, that would have no great matter of formidableness in it, if it be either (as I suppose it) a perfect intercision of all sense : or much less, if it were (as the men of your persuasion use to speak) only a dark passage to another light. But the mischief is, that upon your Hypothesis, a judgment must pass upon a man first, before he can arrive at that other life. Now that is the terrible thing, if I were rid of the danger of that, it would (as you say well) be my interest to believe all the rest, in spite of all objections to the contrary.

Sebast. I do not design to impose upon you ; for it is very true, there is no passage into the other World, without undergoing a Test or Tryal, whether we be fit for Eternal Life or no.

And

And it is most certain also, that if a man dye an impious, a wicked and base person, it were better for him that either he had not been born, or else that the grave and oblivion might cover him to all Eternity. But what need this fright any man whilst he is alive, and may provide himself accordingly? especially since the grace of God puts it in our choice and power to be good, and so qualified, that we may be out of all danger of miscarrying in the Judgment.

For, *Biophilus*, can it be thought that God Almighty should seek the ruine of his Creatures, or that he can have any design upon them to make them eternally miserable? If he had, there would not be the solemnities of a day of Judgment; for he would not need to insnare us in forms of Law, but might without more ado have destroyed us when he pleased, and who could resist him, or dispute the case with him? Undoubtedly he is too great a Majesty to have any little ends to serve, and therefore we can suspect no hurt from him, and there could be nothing but the overflowings of his own goodness that provoked him to make us at the first; and therefore there can be nothing of envy, malignity, or cruelty in any of his counsels and designs about us.

And that all these are not meer sayings or sanguine conjectures of mine, but real truth (besides all other ways of probation) you may be assured by this consideration, that in all Gods demands from us, as the terms and conditions of our happiness, or (which is all one) in all the duties he requires at our hands, and in all the obligations of Religion, there is nothing severe and discouraging, nothing ex-

tremely harsh and difficult, much less impossible: nay, in truth, if things be rightly considered, I believe there will be nothing to be found in any institution of Religion that ever was heard of in the World, that could go so much against the grain with men, as to tempt them to run the hazard of dying eternally, rather than to comply with it. And if any such were to be found, it were ground enough to assure us, that such Institutions proceeded not from God; for such is his Wisdom and Benignity, that he can impose nothing as a severe Task-Master, purely to abridge our liberty, or to break our spirits, and oppress our powers, but only to raise and improve us according to our utmost capacities, and as necessary methods to train us up as Candidates for Eternal Life.

I will not deny but there are some restraints put upon us, and some difficulties we must expect to encounter, otherwise Religion would have no excellency in it, nor could we have either the glory or the pleasure in obtaining our end and happiness, if it were won without sweat and labour. But I do confidently assert, that these difficulties (whatever they are) we shall find just reason to undergo with all cheerfulness, if we do but compare what Religion promises, with what it commands or imposes. And as for the Christian Religion in particular, all this which I have said is so remarkably true of that, that if any thing hath been represented as a branch and necessary duty thereof, which is of a contrary nature to what I have now supposed; I do not doubt with great ease to make it appear, that such suggestion is either a palpable

ble mistake, or a notorious scandal. Why then, I say, should a man think either so ill of God or of himself, as to be afraid or unwilling to fall into his hands? You cannot forebode any evil from him, if you are satisfied that he is perfect and happy, full and glorious, just and good; and therefore you must condemn your self of prodigious folly, in not complying with reasonable and equitable Laws, and of being wilfully accessory to your own calamity, if you dare not undergo his Judgment. So that upon the whole matter there can be no reason, why you should be unwilling to believe there is such a thing, and that is all I desire of you at present, and I heartily conjure you to be true to your self herein.

Bioph. Well, I am resolved to be as indifferent as it is possible to be: now therefore prove it.

Sebast. That I will do with all possible plainness and sincerity; namely, I will make good that there is sufficient reason to incline a prudent man to expect and believe, that after this life God Almighty will call men to account, and judge them according to their former actions and behaviour.

The moral demonstration of a judgment to come.

Now you know it is the nature of Moral Arguments, not to depend upon one single Evidence, but to consist of the united force of several considerations: accordingly my present proof of a Judgment to come (as aforesaid) must comprise these three particulars.

First, I will shew, that the nature and condition of Mankind is such, as to render them fit and capable to come to an account, and to undergo

dergo such a Judgment as we speak of.

Secondly, That it is very agreeable to the Nature and Attributes of God (according to those notions which we have of him) that he should call Mankind to such an account, and judge them.

Thirdly, That God Almighty actually exercises and displays such a Providence in this present World, as gives earnest before-hand, that he really intends to judge it hereafter.

These three things make way for and succeed each other naturally, and all together amount to a full proof of the Point in hand. Wherefore when I have opened and made them out severally in the order I have laid them down, I will leave it to you to collect the result of them.

I. I say the nature and condition of Mankind is such, as renders him capable of undergoing a Judgment in another World; and therefore it is reasonable that he expect it accordingly. This will appear by the instances following.

Mankind is of such a nature, and endued with such powers, as make it reasonable for him to expect Judgment.

In the first place it is notorious, that Mankind is endued with a large and comprehensive mind, which is not confined to the meer objects of his senses and things present before him, but hath a vast scope and prospect, by means of which he surveys the Universe, embraces the whole World, and takes within his Verge, as well things past and things to come, as those that are present, which no other Creature is capable of but himself. The Beast hath no kind of notice of or concern for what was
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in former time, nor no sollicitude about what may come after ; but only applies it self to the present exigencies or conveniences of the body. But man is very curious and inquisitive into History, and how things past of old long before he was born, and is also very thoughtful and anxious what may befall hereafter when he shall be dead and gone. Now this one consideration alone makes him look as if he were a Being that were concerned in the whole frame of Nature, and in all the revolutions of Providence, and at least of more consequence than to be a meer Pageant for the short time of this life, or a Mushroom to shoot out of the Earth, and return to it again, and so be as if he had never been.

Besides, we may observe, that the mind of man doth not only consider the absolute nature of things as they lye singly and severally before it, but compares them together, and estimates their relative natures, the mutual respects that they have to each other, and the various aspects and influences they have upon each other ; and so comparing and conferring things together, raises observations, makes inferences, deduces conclusions, frames general maxims, thereby brings things into order and method, and raises Arts and Sciences. All or any of which things no Creature below himself makes any pretence to, or gives any token of. From whence we may conclude not only the pre-eminence of his Nature, but that he is ordained to higher purposes.

Moreover, Mankind is endowed with liberty of choice and freedom of will, by virtue of which he doth not only move himself by his
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own internal Principles and vital Energy, but also can determine himself to this object or that, and either pursue or desist the prosecution at his own pleasure: insomuch that he is neither carried by the swinge of any superiour causes, nor fatally allured by the powerful charms of any objects from without, no nor by the efficacy of any arguments arising therefrom, nor any impression whatsoever (saving that of God Almighty) can overbear or supersede his own resolution, but that he can act or desist, suspend prosecution or pursue his own choice, and apply himself to this object or that, and follow this argument and motive or the other; he hath such an Helm within himself, that he can sail against Wind and Tide; he can move himself in a calm, and stay himself in a storm: in a word, he can move which way, when and how far he will, and stop his own carriere when he pleases. The truth of this we find by daily experience, and we commonly please our selves too much in this Prerogative of our Natures. We see that which is better, and follow that which we know to be worse; we hear arguments and reject them, because we will do so; we are perswaded to the contrary, and yet go on; and when and whatsoever we act, we find at the same time we could have done quite contrary, if we had pleased. Other Creatures either act meerly as they are acted by superiour Causes drawn by invisible wyers, or fatally inclined by the objects and motives before them; but we are put into the hand of our own counsels, and wholly governed by our selves, as to our inward resolutions and determinations. Now this, as it is a mighty discrimi-

discrimination of our Natures from theirs, so it hath this peculiar effect, that it renders a mans actions properly his own, and imputable to himself and to nothing else, and consequently fits him to undergo a Judgment for them.

But further yet, to make Mankind more capable of a Judgment, he hath a directive Rule or Law of Reason within him, whereby to govern himself both in his Elections and Prosecutions, that is, he acts not only freely and undeterminately in respect of any cause without himself, but he hath a light within to guide and direct those free powers of his, that they may not run riot and move extravagantly, by the means of which he is enabled both to make choice of his designs, and to select fit and proper methods of accomplishing them. For as he is not staked down to some one particular business (as generally other Creatures are) but hath great scope to expatiate in, and variety to please himself withal; so he hath a Card or Compass given him to sail by in that vast Ocean which lyes before him: that is, he hath a faculty of discerning the difference of things, and consequently can judge what is worthy to be propounded as his post and design, and also to measure and adjust the means thereunto, which renders him more fit to give an account both of his Elections and Prosecutions.

Nay farther yet, humane Nature by the advantage of this light within him, hath not only a capacity of apprehending and judging of natural good and evil, or such things as are only pleasant and profitable, or the contrary, but hath also notions of higher good and evil, which we commonly call Moral; that is, he
finds

finds himself obliged to have regard to something else besides and better than his body, namely, either to the Deity, or to the Community of Mankind, or at least to his own better part, his Soul and Mind. None of which are at all considered by any Creature below man, and there is hardly any part of Mankind (at least that deserves to be so esteemed) which doth not think it self concerned in all these. For we see, whosoever hath any thing of a man in him, doth think some actions to become or not become him respectively, meerly as he is a man, which would admit of no difference, but be all alike in a Beast: whereupon it is, that a man cannot dispense with himself in the doing of several things, which are in his power to do, no not in the dark and the greatest privacy, because every man that in any measure understands himself, hath a reverence of himself, and the effect of this betrays it self in that quick sense which Mankind hath peculiarly of shame and honour, which argues him to be accountable to something higher than his senses.

Above all this, it is considerable that Mankind hath not only a speculative apprehension of moral good and evil, but a practical and very quick and pungent sense of it, which we call Conscience, by which he not only remembers and calls to mind whatsoever hath past him, but reflecting also upon the ends and circumstances of his own actions, and comparing what he hath done both for matter and manner either with the rule of Reason within him, or some other Law, he censures and judges himself accordingly. If he hath done well and virtuously, that is, hath approved himself to himself,

self, he then applauds and comforts himself, and feels an unspeakable satisfaction in his own mind: As for Example, If a man have behaved himself gallantly towards his Prince and Country; if he have carried himself ingenuously and gratefully towards his Friends, his Patrons or Benefactors; if he have been beneficent to any part of Mankind; if he have demonstrated love to God, or goodness and good men; if he have restrained his own rage and passions; if he have rescued an innocent from the hand of the oppressor, or done anything of like nature, the heart of every man naturally in such a case feels such an inward delight as sweetens his spirits, and cheers his very countenance. On the contrary, if he have been false, treacherous and ingrateful; if he have been cruel and oppressive, or have said or done any base thing, he is presently upbraided, accused, condemned and tormented by himself. Now what is all this but *Præjudicium*, a kind of anticipation of the Judgment to come?

But if any man shall pretend this thing called Conscience, which we now speak of, to be no natural endowment of Humanity, but only the effect of Custom and Education; such a person may easily undeceive himself, if he will but consider, that all this which I have spoken of Conscience, both as to the matter and form of it (or *Synteresis* and *Syneidesis*, as Learned men are wont to distinguish) is so universal to all Mankind (at least that have not done violence to themselves) that it can with no colour be imputed to Education, but must be resolved into the very nature and sense of the Soul. And moreover, a different notion and apprehension
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of the fore-mentioned particulars, is so deeply implanted in the minds of men, that it is impossible any contrary Custom or Education should absolutely and totally efface it; therefore it is the sense of Nature, and consequently a presage of the Divine Judgment.

To all which add in the last place, That the mind of man seems plainly to be above the Body, and independent of it; for as much as we see, that not only our Reason and the powers of our Souls, are so far from decaying with the Body, that contrariwise they grow more strong and vigorous by those very causes which impair the Body, I mean, by age, exercise and experience. Besides, it is easily observable, that our Souls do, as often as they please, act quite contrary to the interests and inclinations of our Bodies, and frequently controul the passions thereof, as well as correct and over-rule the Verdict of our Senses. Therefore it is not at all probable, that they should perish with our Bodies, but survive to some further purposes, especially if we take in what I intimated before, namely, the consideration of the shortness of the time of this life, which is so very inconsiderable for so excellent a Being, as the Soul to display it self in, that it seems unworthy of all the aforesaid perfections, and more unworthy of the contrivance of that Wisdom which made us, to order it so, unless it be that Mankind is placed here only in a state of probation, and is to be tryed hereafter in order to a more lasting subsistence and duration. Which in consideration of all the premisses, he cannot but be thought capable of, at least if there be a Judge as fit to judge him, as he is fit to undergo a Judgment. Which brings me to my second Branch.

Biophi.

Bioph. Hold a little, I pray, good *Sebastian*, you have spoken many things well and worthily of the pre-eminence of humane Nature, and some of them such as are not only sufficient to erect a mans spirits, and provoke him to hope well of himself, but also do render it in some sort probable, that we are designed for some higher uses, than we commonly apply our selves to. Nevertheless you have not reached your point, nor will all you have said attain the end you propounded, unless you go farther, and prove the Soul of man to be a Spirit or immaterial substance (as the men of your way are wont to speak) that so there may be a plain foundation for its existence out of the Body. Without which, let it be as excellent a Being as it can, and adorned with as many other perfections as you can imagine, it cannot be capable of standing at a Tribunal, and undergoing such a Judgment in another World as we are speaking of.

Sebast. I could have wished you would have given me leave to lay all the parts of my Argument together before you, that so you might have taken a view of it intire and all at once: and then you might have objected, as you should have seen cause. But however I will comply with your Method, and as to that which you have thought fit now to interpose, I answer these two things.

First I say, It is not necessary to the business in hand, that the Soul be proved to be strictly immaterial and capable of existing and acting out of the Body; for as much as at the day of Judgment I suppose the Body shal^l be raised again: and then if it should be so, that all the powers

powers of the Soul were laid asleep by death until that time ; yet now upon a re-union with their proper Organs, they would revive again. So that I did not in my proof fall short of the mark I aimed at, but you out shoot the point in your demand : For whether the Soul be a spiritual substance or no, so long as those perfections, which we have enumerated, belong to it, there is nothing wanting to make it capable of undergoing a Judgment. But,

Secondly, To speak my own mind plainly, and to come home to your satisfaction, I must tell you, that as for my part, I do not doubt but that the Soul of man is properly and strictly

*The Soul of man
proved to be im-
material.*

of a spiritual Nature ; so I am confident that those things which we have ascribed to it, do sufficiently prove it to be so ; seeing it is impossible to salve those *Phænomena*, or to give any tolerable account of those great accomplishments and performances of the Soul before specified from meer matter, let it be modified or circumstantiated how it can.

Simple perception of objects is of the lowest rank of humane perfections, and indeed is not proper to humane Nature, but common to Brutes ; yet this seems impossible to be performed by meer matter. For the Eye, though it be a very admirable and exquisite Organ, can by no means be said to perceive the objects of sight, but only to transmit or present them to some perceptive power. It doth, I say, only as a Glass represent the Species or Image of the thing, which even a dead Eye or an hole, will in some measure perform ; but it makes no judgment of the object at all, as appears by this, that

that all objects are transmitted reversed, or with the heels upward, through the Eye, and so left, till some higher power sets them right and on their Legs, and judges of their distance and other circumstances.

Now if it be so, that matter thus advantageously disposed and improved, as in the admirable structure of the Eye, cannot perform that one act of simple perception, what shall become of all those nobler actions of the Soul? and into what shall they be resolved? Such as self-motion, the strange celerity of thought, memory of that which is past, prudence and forecast for that which is to come, and a thousand other strange operations. Is it imaginable that meer matter should understand, argue, dispute, consider and confer the relation of one thing to another, and thence infer consequences and make conclusions? Is it likely that meer body and quantity should be sensible of shame and honour, nay be conscientious too, and accuse, condemn, and torture it self; or which is most wonderful of all, check, controul, deny, limit, and mortifie it self? He that will undertake to shew how all these things may be performed by Atoms and motion only, is a subtil Mechanist indeed, and I do not doubt but at the same rate such a man may be able to make a new World, when he pleases, with the same Atoms as Materials. For it is evident, there is more intricacy in this little World of Man, than in the whole Fabrick of Heaven and Earth besides.

Wherefore if matter or body cannot perform the aforesaid operations, then the Soul of man, which doth perform them, must be

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acknowledged to be a spiritual substance.

Bioph. In troth you talk very shrewdly ; but for my life, I cannot understand what you mean by this thing which you call Spirit, and therefore I reject the notion as gibberish and nonsense

Sebast. Softly, good *Biophilus* , what reason is there for that hasty conclusion? Must we needs deny every such thing to be, as is hard to understand? Must we, like dull Boys, tear out the Lesson that is difficult to learn? Is nothing true but what is easie, nor possible but what is facile? But besides, let me tell you upon second thoughts, there is not more difficulty in understanding the Nature of Spirits, than there is in conceiving how all the aforesaid operations should be performed without them, no nor half so much neither; so that nothing is gotten by the objection; for it is a very vain thing to object difficulty, when at the same time you are forced to acknowledge the thing to be necessary. But why, I pray you, what is the cause that spiritual substance is not as intelligible as corporeal?

Bioph. O Sir, there is a vast difference in the case. I can see and feel the latter, but so I cannot the former.

Sebast. Nay believe me, there you are out, you see and feel only the accidents of a bodily substance, but not the substance it self, no more than you can see or feel a Spirit.

Bioph. Pardon me, at least I see and feel the bodily substance by the accidents ; that is, I am assured of its presence and existence, and I can affirm such things of it upon that testimony of my senses.

Sebast.

Sebast. And you may affirm as much of a Soul (if you please) though you can neither see nor feel it, forasmuch as you plainly perceive the properties and operations of it.

Bioph. That is close and to the purpose, I confess; but still I cannot tell what to make of this thing called Spirit, for I can frame no image of it in my imagination, as I can do of other things.

Sebast. Why, there is it now. I perceive now, *Biophilus*, you have a desire to see with your mouth, and hear with your Eyes. For as reasonably every jot may you expect to do either of those, as to frame a sensible imagination of a Spirit. That which we call Imagination (you know) is nothing else but the impress of the colour, bigness, or some other accidents (of a thing that hath been presented to our senses) retained in, and it may be) a little diversified by our phancy. But now if a Spirit have no colour nor bulk, nor such other accidents to be represented to our phancy through our outward senses, how is it possible you should have an image of it there? No, no; spiritual Beings are only capable of affording us an intellectual Idea, namely, our higher faculty of Reason from observation of their effects and operations, concludes their Essence, and takes an estimate of their Nature; and indeed it is a flat contradiction to require any other evidence of that kind of Beings.

Bioph. This kind of discourse is very subtil, and I cannot tell what to object farther to it; go on therefore to your second Branch, perhaps there I may better cope with you.

Sebast. The second step which I take to-

The natural notions men have of God, render it reasonable to expect that he will judge the world.

towards the proof of a Judgment to come is, that as on the one side Mankind appears to be fit and capable of being judged hereafter; so on the other hand it is agreeable to the Nature and Attributes of God, and to those notions we have of a Deity, that he should call the World to such an account, and this appears briefly thus.

The most common and most natural notion which men have of the Divine Majesty is, that he is a Being absolutely perfect, that is, (amongst other accomplishments) that he is a most powerful, wise, just and good Being; there is hardly any body that thinks of a God, but considers him under these Attributes and Perfections, and he that divests him of any of these Perfections, renders him neither an object of fear nor of love, and consequently not a God: inasmuch that were it not for politick ends, namely, to avoid infamy or other punishment amongst men, doubtless those that deny to him any of these Attributes, had as good flatly deny him to have any Being at all.

Now if these things be included in the natural notion of God, they not only capacitate him to be a Judge of the World, if he pleases, but give great assurance that he will do it; for if he be a wise Being, he cannot but see how things go, and particularly how his Creatures carry themselves here below; if he be powerful, he hath it in his hand to rectifie those disorders he observes amongst them, and both to punish the evil and to reward the good. And if he be good and just, it cannot but be expected from him that he will set things to rights

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one time or other, when his Wisdom shall think fit; but it is evident, this is not done exactly and answerably to those Attributes of his in this World, therefore there is no reason to doubt but he will assuredly do it in another World; and therefore the Scripture tells us, *He hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, &c.*

Bioph. Not too fast, good *Sebastian*. I know not certainly what apprehensions other men may have; but for my part, though I do acknowledge a God (and that not only politically (as you suspect) but upon the Principles of Reason) yet I must profess to you, I do not think the natural notion of God includes those Attributes you speak of. Why may there not be a God, and he only a necessary Agent, and then there is no danger of an after-reckoning with him?

Sebast. Ah, *Biophilus*, I am heartily sorry to find so unworthy a notion of God still to find any room in your thoughts (though it were but in suspicion only.) It is very certain indeed, that if he be God not a necessary Agent. only a necessary Agent, then all fear of a Judgment is discharged, and as certain that all Religion can then be nothing else but a groundless Superstition at the best. For then God must needs be a very tame Deity which men may play withal, and abuse at pleasure, as the Frogs did by their wooden King in the Fable.

But then in the Name of Goodness, what need is there of any God at all, if a necessary Agent will serve the turn? Why can we not as well suppose the World to be eternal, as

make such a contemptible Being, as a necessary Agent is, to be eternal, only to give beginning to the World.

Or rather, why if we attribute one Perfection, *i. e.* Eternity to him, why not all the rest, which seem to be inseparable from it? For as much as it is not imaginable how the first Cause should be the meanest of all, and he that gave those other perfections to other things, should be destitute of them himself.

Or how can we believe that such a fettered, impotent, unthinking and unwise Being, should make a World in that beauty and perfection which this World consists of? Or at least how is it possible that a natural or necessary Agent (which is like a Gally-slave Chained down to his Bench, and confined to his Task and Subject) should make a World with such curiosity and diversity of things, yet with that exquisite order and harmony which we observe in Nature?

Do you think that the frame of things could not possibly have been any otherwise than they are? Can you phansie that nothing could have been better nor worse than it is now? If you see any footsteps of wisdom or choice, any possibility that any thing should have been otherwise than it is, you forgo your necessary Agent?

Do you not see great and manifest instances of design and contrivance in the order of things, *viz.* one thing fitted to another, and one subordinate to another, and all together conspiring to some publick end and use? Now sure a necessary Agent could not guide things so, because it hath no ends or designs of its own.

Again,

Again, if God be a necessary Agent, I would fain be resolved how it comes to pass that we are not so too? I think you granted me even now that we chuse our own way, propound ends to our selves, and voluntarily pursue them, when we could (if we pleased) as freely chuse and act contrary, and this we justly glory in as the perfection of our Nature. Now how to conceive that I should be a free Agent, and that he who made me so should be a necessary one, that is, that the effect should be more excellent than the cause, neither I nor (as I suspect) any body else can understand?

But I need not in this place industriously set my self to confute this odd conceit of Gods being only a necessary Agent, because in my third Branch I shall fundamentally undermine it, and (as I think) leave neither colour nor pretence for it, and therefore with your leave I now hasten to that.

Bioph. Go on then in Gods Name.

Sebast. My third and last Point for the proof of a Judgment to come is this: God doth actually exercise such a Providence in and over the World for the present, as gives great assurance that he will judge it hereafter. For these are as it were the two several ends of the same Chain, a Providence here, and a Judgment hereafter. They do naturally and mutually draw on each other. If there be a Judgment to come, there must be a provident Eye over the World for the present in order to it: that is, God must so mind the World, that he perfectly understand how things go, how

There is an actual Providence in this World, therefore there will be a Judgment in the next.

men carry themselves; what there is amiss amongst them, what requires punishment, and what deserves a reward; otherwise he cannot be said to judge; forasmuch as without this it might rather be said, there is a day of Execution coming, than a day of Judgment. And on the other side, if there be a Providence in this World, and it be true that God observes how men carry themselves towards him, it must speak his intention to reward and punish hereafter in proportion to such observation; for otherwise that Providence would be fruitless and to no purpose, it would be a meer matter of vain curiosity, and a needless trouble to the Divine Majesty, as the *Epicureans* objected. But now that God doth exercise such a Providence in this World, as from whence we may reasonably preface a Judgment to come, I think will abundantly appear by these three things.

1. There hath been such a thing as we call Prophecy or Prediction of things before they came to pass, which cannot be without a Providence.

2. There have been Miracles, which could not be without the Divine interposition.

3. There are frequent (though not altogether miraculous) instances in all Ages of a Divine presence in, and influence upon, the affairs of the World.

Prophecy a certain Argument of a Providence in the World.

1. First, I ground the assertion of a Providence in this present World upon the Prophecies and Predictions of things beforehand, which have been verified by real effects in their respective times and seasons. It is evident, that whosoever is able certainly

certainly to foretel things before they are, must see through all the Series of Causes which produce such events: especially if he define also the precise time and other circumstances of the accomplishment; but above all, whosoever shall declare before-hand, not only what shall come to pass according to the course of natural and necessary Causes, but also such things as are casual and contingent, or subject to the choice and indifferency of free and voluntary Agents, must have a mighty reach with him, and make a very curious and accurate inspection into the Conjunctions and Conspiracy of all things, as well as into their particular Natures, Tendencies and Inclinations: for as every Effect must have its Causes before it can be; so the prediction of such effect must depend upon a certain knowledge of those respective causes which are pregnant of it; therefore if there ever have been such a thing as Prophecy, there is a Providence.

Now for the matter of fact, or that there have been certain and punctual predictions of things long before they came to pass, is the constant belief of all Nations, and he that denies it must give the lye to the greatest and best part of Mankind. You may remember that *Tully* pursues this Argument in his Books, *De Divinatione*, and he there gives too many and too remarkable instances of it, to be denied or eluded; but I shall chuse to set before you only two passages out of the holy Scripture to this purpose. For though I perceive you have not such a reverence for those Books as they deserve, yet such palpable matters of fact as I shall instance in, and which were of so publick
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a concern and general notice, as whereupon the revolution of whole Nations depended, can afford no ground for calling in question the historical truth of them. And let me tell you, I make choice of these instances out of those Writings, for no other cause but for the notoriety of the fact, and the easiness of confutation, if it had been otherwise than true.

The former of the two passages is the prediction of the slavery of the Children of *Israel* in the Land of *Egypt*, and their miraculous deliverance thence, above four hundred years before it came to pass, and the accomplishment (when the time came) answering the Prediction precisely to a very day, so as to be observed by the whole Body of the people, and the remembrance of it perpetuated by an anniversary Solemnity ever after, as you may see *Exod.* 12. 41.

The other instance is the Babylonish Captivity, which was foretold above seventy years before it came to pass, and that in a time of the greatest unlikelihood that any such calamity should befall; namely, it was prophesied of when the Jews were in the greatest peace and prosperity. And then for the term of this Captivity, that was foretold to last 70 Years, neither more nor less; and both these periods (as well as other circumstances) were exactly, and to admiration, hit in the event of things.

Now in both these instances, the things were prophesied of so long before-hand, there were so many obstacles in the way of their accomplishment, and so much of the will of man also interested in both the cases, and yet notwithstanding such punctual exactness is to be seen
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in the Event, that it is plainly impossible that humane wit should so much as guess probably at them ; therefore the Predictions must be grounded upon Divine intimation : and then God is so far from being a necessary Agent, that it is apparent he minds the World, and looks narrowly into all the parts of it, from one end to another, and governs and manages inferiour Causes.

2. My second proof of an actual Providence in this World is from Miracles. By a Miracle

Miracles necessarily argue a Providence.

I mean any thing coming to pass, which is either for the matter or manner of it above the power of natural Causes, or at least contrary to their establisht course and order ; whether it be effected by heightening them above their ordinary pitch, or accelerating their motion, or by suddenly bringing those causes together which lay at a distance ; or whether it be by depressing, suspending or superseding any of them.

And I reason thus : If any thing have ever been brought to pass above the capacity or out of the method of the natural and common Causes, then there is an active Deity which exerts his power in that case. Or if ever the course of Nature hath been interrupted, it must be by the interposition of the supreme Cause : For it is neither intelligible, that Nature should go out of course of it self, without its own decay and failure ; nor possible that being once so out of course, it should ever be able to recover it self into its former order without the help of Omnipotency : therefore if ever there have been a Miracle in the World, there is proof of a Providence.

Now

Now that such extraordinary things, as we here suppose, have happened, cannot be doubted without great ignorance, or denied without impudence. I know there is a sort of witty men (in their way) who endeavour to put a slight upon Miracles, and therefore are very captious and critical in such cases as this; but if they can elude some occurrences that have been believed or pretended miraculous, yet they will never be able to evade them all. And if there have been but one acknowledged Miracle in all the time of this World, it will be sufficient to prove a Providence. They will perhaps impute some Cures that have been said to be done by Miracle, to the efficacy of some Medicine, although they can neither tell us what that specifick Remedy was, nor much less tell us how the Symptoms should so suddenly cease upon the use of it. It may be they will tell you in the general (with confidence enough) that the strange things done in *Egypt* and in the Wilderness, were effected by the sudden application of Actives to Passives; but cannot so much as pretend to satisfy any man how such remote Causes were brought together and exalted to such an extraordinary degree of efficacy, as to produce such admirable effects on the sudden as those cases import.

Or if they could speak tolerable sense in some of those particulars, yet what natural account can be given of the raising of the dead? or of unlearned mens speaking all kind of Languages in an instant? What natural Cause will they assign of the Suns standing still in *Joshua's* time? Or of that preternatural Eclipse at our Saviour's Passion? What could intercept the Suns light
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when the two Luminaries were in opposition? Or what restored it to its motion again when it was interrupted, as in the former instance? Or to its light again when it intermitted, as in the latter instance? To endeavour to give natural accounts of these things, will prove as absurd and ridiculous to reason, as to deny the matter of fact, is void of Faith and Religion.

But if any of these instances will not pass with such men, because they were over, long before our time, or because the truth of them depends upon the Authority of Scripture; there are other innumerable passages in all Ages not liable to that exception, that cannot be resolved into any Cause less than a Supreme and Omnipotent. Amongst which, what will they say to this which happens almost every Year? Namely, that after a long wet season, it shall suddenly clear up and be fair weather again; and contrariwise after a long dry season, it shall unexpectedly be wet and rainy. Whereas if they look only to natural Causes, the quite contrary must happen. Forasmuch as the more rain hath been at any time, the more may be still, because there are the more vapours from whence Clouds are raised; and the longer a dry season hath lasted, there is every day the less reason to expect rain, because there want vapours out of which it should be raised. Now to impute this sudden and admirable change only to the Winds, is to beg the Question; for it is well enough known, that the Winds depend upon vapours as well as rain; and to ascribe it to the Stars, is to confess an humourous resolution, that right or wrong we will shut God out of the World. But this leads me to my

*More ordinary
instances of Pro-
vidence in the
World.*

3 Third proof of a present Providence, viz. from the more frequent and ordinary instances of a Divine influence upon the affairs of the World. The effects of which, though they are not accounted miraculous, because they are common, yet they give sufficient indication of Divine administration. And of this kind, there are so many which offer themselves to an observant mind, that to seek flaws, and go about to make specious objections against some few of them, will be rather an Argument of resolved unwillingness to believe, than of any just grounds of Infidelity. For like as in a great Cable made up of several smaller Cords, if perchance some of the threads should flaw or break, yet the remainder will be able to bear the stress of whatsoever use it shall be put to.

Now under this Head I reckon in the first place, as very observable, that there is scarcely any great thing ever brought about in the World, which God may not be seen to have an hand in; and that may be collected generally from the inadequateness of the visible means to most notable productions: As when great preparations are defeated or laid aside, and mean and inconsiderable ones do the business. This is that which *Solomon* observed long ago, *That the battle is not to the strong, nor the race to the swift, nor bread to men of understanding:* And we cannot want an Example of it nearer hand, when we remember the Restoration of his now Majesty: For it pleased God to deal in that particular, as he did by *Gideon's* Army, when he dismissed the greatest part of the Forces,

ces, and did his business with a few, and those very unlikely for such an Atchievement.

But more admirable than this, is the preservation of the holy Scripture in all Ages, both from total abolition by the flames of Persecution; and from corruption, by the capricious phancies of such men as would neither sincerely believe it, nor absolutely reject it. Such also is the preservation of the Christian Religion, when all the wit and all the power of the World combined together against it; and such was the success of the Apostles in propagating that Religion, and planting the Christian Church, when a few Fisher-men leavened the World with a Doctrine quite against the grain of it, and naked Truth prevailed against Authority, Art and Interest in conjunction.

Hitherto also I reduce the maintenance of Magistracy and Civil Government; and I look upon it as a standing evidence of a Providence, that the strong bands of wicked and refractory men should stand in awe of a single man like themselves, only because he is invested with Authority. This, if it be duly considered, is very strange, and can be resolved into nothing but a Providence. Nor is it less strange, that considering the great numbers of evil men, their secrecy and closeness, their cunning and falshood, their envy and necessity, their activity and selfishness, they should be able to do no more hurt in the World than they do. Why do they not assassinate whom they please? Or what is the reason that they do not forswear men out of their lives and fortunes, and act whatsoever their revenge or covetousness or lust shall prompt them to? And no account can
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be given of this, but the powerful restraint of Providence.

Moreover, there are remarkable Examples in all Ages of evil men dogged by their own guilt, and tortured by their own Consciences, when-as no body else either accused or hurt them; and on the other side, as frequent instances of vertuous men, who have been very comfortable under great difficulties, and whose spirits have been born up with an admirable bravery under such pressures as would ordinarily crush and sink other men: and this, although the persons thus carrying themselves, were otherwise of no remarkable strength or courage. Neither of which passages can be resolved into any other Causes, than the mighty influence of a Providence.

Nay further it is very observable, how strangely sometimes secret sins are brought to light, especially such as Murder and Treachery, and where all Arts and advantages were made use of for concealment; such persons becoming their own accusers, when no body else could do it for them, and not unusually their own Executioners too.

Above all these, there are some instances of vengeance befalling very flagitious men, so signally, and with such pat and significant circumstances, that (without any uncharitableness) we may be led by the suffering to the sin, as in the famous case of *Adonibezek*, *Judg.* 1. 7. whose barbarous usage of threescore and ten Kings, cutting off their Thumbs and great Toes, and making them, like Dogs, gather their meat under his Table, was repaid upon himself in the same severity. Of kind to which
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are those pannick fears, and shiverings that oftentimes attend blood-guilty men as long as they live: and though they may have escaped revenge from the hand of men; yet this, as a *Cain's* mark set upon them by the hand of God, indeleibly sticks by them, and follows them to their Graves.

It is needless to say any thing more on this subject, forasmuch as every man that doth not wilfully shut his Eyes, may collect instances to this purpose, both from the Government of the World in general, and from his own Fortunes in particular. For besides the quiet serenity and comfortableness (in token of the Divine favour) which usually attends a vertuous course of life, and the anxiety, torment and uneasiness which as frequently (in testimony of the Divine dislike) attends a wicked and flagitious one; it is not a very unusual, nor (to be sure) an unpleasant sight, to behold the former crowned with signal success and Worldly prosperity, and the latter punished with shame and beggery: and this sometimes shall happen in such circumstances, when there is nothing to which this different success can be imputed but merely Divine Providence, forasmuch as the latter shall otherwise be more cunning for the World, and every whit as industrious and frugal as the former; but Divine Providence only makes the discrimination, whilst the one is under the blessing of Heaven, and the other is apparently blasted and cursed.

And now what think you, *Biophilus*, upon the whole matter: have I not acquitted myself in all the three things I propounded? And now laying all these things together, is not

here sufficient evidence to determine a prudent man in the case, and to satisfy him that there is a Providence in this World, and consequently that there will be a Judgment hereafter?

Bioph. I cannot tell, *Sebast.* I confess you have said many very considerable things, and some of them beyond what I could have expected in the case. But I have one main Objection, which especially touches the last Branch of your Argument, and which, if it stick by you, all you have said will signify nothing; but if you come clearly off from it, I shall not know what to think of the business. It is this, in short: I do not see any such settled and constant method in the management of the affairs of this World,

*A Vindication of
Divine Providence in the ob-
scurity of some of
its Dispensations
in this life.*

as must necessarily argue a Providence; for in particular, notwithstanding all you have said, it cannot be denied, that very often the best of men are oppressed and born down by ill Fortune; and contrariwise evil men are very happy and prosperous: therefore it may seem that those instances which you collect in favour of your opinion, may happen by chance, rather than by the dispensation of a Providence; and then if there be no Providence in this World, by your own Argument, there can be no Judgment hereafter.

Sebast. If that be all, or the main of what you have to object, I am in hope to see some good issue of this Conference: for in the first place you know, that which is impeached by this Objection, is but one single instance out of many which I have brought for the assertion of a Providence; and consequently if this should fail,

fail, or if I should yield you all that the objection pretends to, yet so long as the other are unshaken by it, that great Doctrine may stand firm notwithstanding; for it is but as if you should peck one single stone out of an huge building, or (as I said before) find a flaw in some one thred of a great Cable, neither of which can weaken or endanger the one or the other. But then besides, you cannot be ignorant that this which you now mention, is an old thred-bare exception worn out of all fashion by the old Atheists and *Epicureans*, and which hath been canvassed and baffled over and over by men of all Ages and of several Perswasions, by *Job*, by *David*, by *Solomon*, nay, by *Tully*, *Seneca*, *Plutarch*, and several others, that it is a great argument of the poverty of your Cause to be seen in it now a-days, and may justly excuse my labour in confuting it. However because you think fit to give it countenance, I will briefly say these three things in the case, viz.

First, That some measure of intricacy or obscurity in the dispensation of Divine Providence, is no argument against it, but for it.

Secondly, That there are very great reasons assignable why it may please the Divine Majesty to proceed sometimes indiscriminately, and keep no constant visible method in the distributions of good and evil in this present life.

Thirdly, Yet however this be sometimes obscure, there are at other times sufficient and legible instances of a distinguishing Providence.

1. Some measure of intricacy in the dispensations of Divine Providence, is so far from being

ing an argument against it, that it is a great argument for it. For if we do not make God a meer necessary Agent (which I hope I have satisfied you in) we must allow something to his Prerogative and Sovereignty, and consequently grant that he may do some things, because he will do so, and whereof he doth not make us acquainted with the reasons; and we may very well allow to his Wisdom, to have a reach beyond us, and to have other measures to govern the World by, than we could have made for him. What, shall we call God to an account of his Management? Shall he not govern the World at all, unless he order it just as we would have him? This is apparently so far from being reasonable, that it would be much more so to conclude on the contrary; namely, that if there were no depths in the Divine Counsel which we could not fathom, no Meanders in the way of Providence, which we could not trace, it would be very suspicious, whether there were any thing of Divinity in the whole business. For if things were constantly managed one way without any variation, we should be apt to think all was under the rigid Laws of a fatal Necessity. If on the other side there were no rule to be observed, no footsteps of any method, then we should be tempted to think Chance ruled the World; but when we observe an intermixture of these two, *viz.* that there is a rule, though there be some exceptions from it, then we have reason to conclude, that all is under a powerful and a free Agent, who if he be also infinitely wise, cannot but see reason for several things which we cannot comprehend.

2. There are very great and weighty reasons assignable why in this particular instance of Providence (namely in the distribution of good and evil in this World) the Divine Majesty should not be obliged to gratifie our curiosity with a plain account of his proceedings, but make some exceptions to his general rule; amongst which these following are considerable.

First, Because such a constant and visible exercise of distributive Justice, as your objection seems to require, would be such an irrefragable and palpable evidence of a Providence, as would leave no room for the discovery of ingenuity or a virtuous disposition; it would deprive men of the liberty of their choice, whether they would be Atheistical, or devout and religious: and consequently there would be no excellency in Piety and Vertue. For (as I have said before in a like case) it could be no argument of love to God or goodness, that a man took care to serve and please God, if he constantly stood over us in a visible and undeniable Providence, so as that every offender were taken in the very fact, and presently led to Execution; and on the other side, if every virtuous action were forthwith rewarded and crowned. In short, it is not agreeable to the Mind of God to overrun the freedom of our choice, since he hath endowed us with it, nor to supersede that distinctive faculty of our Nature; for should he do so, he should act contrary to himself and to his own Glory, as well as to the nature and condition of Mankind.

Again, Secondly, A checkered and diversified method of Divine Providence, wherein

there is an intertexture of prosperity and adversity in the fortunes of virtuous men, tends more to their improvement than a more regular and constant Providence would do. For as a continued course of prosperity is too apt to tempt men to be wanton and careless; so a perpetual series of adversity would be as apt to sink and depress their spirits: but a middle way of interchange in their condition, balances them on both sides, and maintains them in a more even temper and conversation. And for this reason it pleases the Divine Wisdom to make such false steps as you are apt to imagine them to be.

To which add in the third place, That herein lies the very secret of Divine Wisdom, and by this very way he doth most effectually assure us of the point in question (namely, a Judgment to come) in that there is such apparent necessity of it. For if the Divine Majesty should let the present World run at random, and interpose himself in no case to check the hurry, or punish the disorder, there would seem no reason to expect justice from him hereafter, who gave no token of it all this while; and then on the other side, if he interposed so frequently and constantly, as to leave no irregularity unpunished, nor any brave action unrewarded, there would be no business left, nor no need of a day of Judgment. Whereas by affording us some plain instances of his discrimination in this World, we are satisfied that he minds how things go, and is able to judge; and yet by permitting several other things to run riot, and seemingly to be unanimator upon, he hath as it were cut out work for a day of Judgment.

3. Notwithstanding all this, as I said before, there are some sufficient and undeniable instances of a distinguishing Providence in this World. I have granted to you, that sometimes the ways of God are intricate and involved, and I have offered at some reasons of it, to which many others might have been added, and amongst the rest, that by this means we may be kept humble and modest, and taught to admire and reverence God, rather than to judge or pronounce of him. For these, I say, and other reasons best known to infinite Wisdom, he thinks fit sometimes to lose us in the Meander of his ways; yet I say they are not always thus obscure, but sometimes he treads such plain and direct paths, that we may easily follow him. And of this I have set before you several examples already, and whosoever will diligently attend to it, may easily collect more; but I will not omit to put you in mind of one great and standing one, and (as far as is possible) beyond all exception, and that was in the History of the Jewish Nation, who were infallibly sure to be happy and most remarkably prosperous so long as they stuck to the true God and the Laws he had given them by *Moses*, and as sure to be signally miserable and calamitous, whensoever they apostatized from their God, or debauched their Religion. So that that people was placed as a light upon a mountain, and were an illustrious instance to all the World of that great Truth we are now discoursing of; and if there were no more instances of this kind, that alone would be sufficient for the purpose.

Bioph. I must confess, if the story be true,
O 4 there

there was a very strange Fate attended that people.

Sebast. Fate, do you call it? What colour or pretence in the World is there for imputing those admirable revolutions to Fate? Could blind Fate make distinction of persons and actions, and apply it self in the distribution of good or evil in proportion to mens deserts or miscarriages? Do not disparage your own discretion so much, as to use the word Fate in such a case. No, assure your self that was a signal display of Divine Providence, and such an one as you cannot expect or demand a greater.

Bioph. But if it were the effect of Providence, as you will needs have it, I wonder how it comes to pass that there is no such thing now; or why all the rest of Mankind was neglected by Divine Providence, and only that people, and in that age and corner of the World, so carefully managed by it.

Sebast. O *Biophilus*, ask not God an account of his Prerogative, nor much less prescribe to him how he shall govern the World. What if he pitying the dark state of the World then, did something extraordinary to relieve and enlighten it: and what if having once given such abundant proof of himself, he shall think that sufficient to all After-ages? Or, to say no more, what if it pleases him to make Faith in some respects more difficult now than it was then? Who shall expostulate the matter with him, especially since he hath not left us destitute of sufficient grounds to determine a prudent man in the case? Which is all I have pretended to assert all this while, and I think I have made it

it good at last, though with some tediousness of discourse, for which I beg your pardon.

Phil. Dear *Sebastian*, do not slander our judgments so much, as to suspect we should think any thing tedious that is so much to the purpose. I thank you heartily for the pains you have taken with us; for although (I thank God) I have long lived under a firm perswasion both of a Providence here, and a Judgment hereafter; yet I am greatly rejoiced to find all sure under me, and when my reason encourages my devotion: and especially I think my self obliged to you for the satisfaction you have given my Neighbour: is it not so, *Biophilus*?

Bioph. I tell you plainly, *Sebastian* hath staggered me, and I cannot tell what to say more for the present, but I will consider further of it at leisure.

Phil. I, but do it quickly, good *Biophilus*, you Sceptical Gentlemen are apt to take too long time to consider of these matters; you know, dye we must, and that shortly too, so that we have not any long time to consider in; what an horrible surprise would it be, if whilst we stand doubting and disputing, we should hear the sound of the last Trump, and be summoned to that great Tribunal? When Death once arrests us, there is no Bail will be taken, we must come to a strict account, and await an irreversible Doom, so that there is no dallying in this matter.

If either of us had intelligence that an Enemy were coming upon us with design to assault us and take away our life, although it were a person of but ordinary reputation that brought us the news, yet it would startle us, and we should

should not stand disputing the truth of the relation, but presently either prepare our selves to appease him, or arm our selves to encounter him; and then if no Enemy appeared, we could securely expostulate the false Alarm afterwards. Or if there came a report, that the Sea had broken its banks, and overflowed the plain whereon our Houses stand, I assure my self that neither of us would stand gravely deliberating, whether it were possible or no, or cavilling about the neglect of repairing the banks, or least of all lose so much time as whilst we could send Messengers, and expect their return, but first get us up to the Mountains, and there at leisure inform our selves of the truth of all circumstances.

When *Noah*, for no less than one hundred and twenty years together, preached repentance, and foretold a Flood coming to drown all the World, no question but the generality of men laught at him as a timorous hypochondriacal person: They could object how unusual a thing it was he talked of, a thing that no man had seen, or had ever happened to the World before: They would discourse philosophically in the case too, and represent it as a very absurd thing, to imagine that the water should rise above the Earth, and overflow the tops of their stately Houses; for (might they say) where shall there be water enough to do it? from whence should it come? or how should this Fellow have notice of it before all other men? And perhaps they would conclude, that at worst they should have time to shift for themselves when they see it come in earnest, and escape as well as others. Hereupon they

they ate and drank and feasted and made merry, and laught at that precise Coxcomb with his new Machine of an Ark: but so, saith our Saviour, *shall the coming of the Son of man be.*

Alas, *Biophilus*, whilst we dream, the Judgment slumbers not: whilst we doubt and dispute, God is in earnest: and the time draws on apace, when Christ Jesus, the Judge of the World, shall come *in the glory of his Father and of all the holy Angels*, the Heavens shall then melt away, and the Earth be on fire from one end of it to another; the dead shall rise out of their Graves, and make an huge Assembly; the Books of all mens actions shall be opened, and the Devil together with every mans own Conscience, shall be the Accusers. Then shall all those that are conscious to themselves to have lived virtuously and holily, look up with joy and comfort to see their Saviour become their Judge; to find a vindication from all those unjust censures that have past upon them here below; to come to an end of their labours, a reward of their services, the accomplishment of their faith and hopes. Lord, what joy will be in their countenances, what glory upon their heads! How the Angels smile upon them, and welcome them to their Journies end, and Heaven opens in an admirable Scene of light and glory to receive them!

But on the other side, all that are privy to themselves to have lived wickedly, basely and unprofitably, shall look pale and tremble, and *call upon the rocks and mountains to hide them from the face of the Lamb that sits upon the Throne*; for they shall see all black and dismal about them, no tears will move pity, no Rhetorick

torick will perfwade, no excufes will be admitted, no Appeal be allowed, no refuge to be found, nor Reprieve to be hoped for; but they fhall hear that dreadful Sentence, *Depart accursed into everlafting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels*, and fhall fee Hell open her mouth to receive them into unquenchable flames.

Bioph. I proteft you fpeak with fuch feeling, *Phil.* that your difcourfe hath more power upon me than all the Arguments that ever I heard in my life. And I know not what is the matter, but my heart trembles; therefore let me once more intreat you to adjourn the remainder of this difcourfe till another time, and in the mean while I'll confider of it, as I promifed you.

Phil. Ah! dear Neighbour, do not prove like that unhappy *Felix* in the Scripture, do not go about to elude what you cannot evade; no, put not off this bufinefs a moment longer: now that it feems God hath touched your heart, quench not his holy Spirit, it may be you will never be in fuch a temper again, if you lofe this opportunity.

Bioph. I affure you I like this temper (as you call it) fo well, that I do not defire to feel more of it. But if you are refolved to go on to torment me, I pray do me the favour firft to answer me this queftion. If thefe things be fo as you represent them, how comes it to pafs that men unconcerned about Religion, dye as comfortably oftentimes as any others? The reason of my queftion is this, becaufe you will pretend that whilft men are well in health, and swimming with the Tide of profperity, they

they may either artificially put off the thoughts of these things, though they be true; or the noise of business, and the caresses of their senses may obscure all apprehension of another World. But sure, when men find themselves dying, and that there is but one way with them, it should be too late for them to flatter themselves, or to admit of the flatteries of others; then surely prejudices cease, and men are at leisure to think: the glory of the World cannot dazzle their Eyes when it is leaving them, and they it: what then, I say, can be the reason if these things be true (which you speak so affectionately of) that there is not as remarkable a difference in mens temper of spirit when they come to dye, as there seems to be in their conversation whilst they are alive?

How it comes to pass that there is no greater difference in the last act of mens lives.

Sebast. I apprehend your question very well, and the reasons of your asking it too. And for answer to it, I pray tell what is the reason that men that love their health and their Estates both very well, will nevertheless be Drunkards and Whore-Masters and Gamesters, though they see by daily experience that these are very sure methods to out them of both? You will tell me, I suppose, that they feed themselves with absurd and unreasonable hopes which fool their discretion, or that they are bewitched and besotted with those kind of pleasures, and so consider nothing at all. Why, just so it is here, the things we speak of are undoubtedly true, and the miscarriage in them is fatal; but men are careless and incogitant, and slip into the pit of destruction before they are aware;
they

they live merrily, because they never think of any thing, and they dye as fottishly as they lived.

Again, there is another sort of men that are captious and conceited, who will chop Logick, as we say, with God Almighty; they will have not only their reason satisfied, but their curiosity also, or they will not believe; they must see a Spirit and Heaven and Hell, or one must come from the dead to tell them News out of the other World, or they will not be contented. Now God will not indulge this humor of theirs, and they are resolved to venture him, that is, they will be damned rather than forgo it.

Besides, there are others take a great deal of pains to disbelieve, they will use all the Arts of Sophistry, all the tricks and evasions of wit, intrench and fortifie themselves in their Atheistical conceits; in a word, they will cheat their own reason, outface their own Conscience, and bring upon themselves a stupid insensibility of all that is good and vertuous, and so, in conclusion, they dye quietly, and go silently into the bottomless pit.

To all this you must consider, that it is very probable that many of these men may be very far from dying chearfully, though we are not able to observe their Agonies and torments; for it may very well be, that when they once begin to consider what a desperate condition they are in, the very thoughts of that, together with their bodily disease in conjunction, presently overwhelms their spirits, and makes their passage out of the world more compendious, but never the more comfortable.

But

But after all, you shall find some of the aforesaid persons, when they come to dye, sadly bewail their folly and carelesness of this kind; but where-ever did you hear of an holy and vertuous man that ever repented of his choice or pains in Religion, or care of his Soul, and sollicitude in preparation for this occasion? It's possible indeed such a man may express no transports, because his body is like other mens, and the strength of his disease may infeeble his spirits and cloud his reason, and so interrupt the exercise of his faith and hope. And on the other side, the profane and irreligious man, though perhaps (as you suppose) he cannot or will not dissemble at the approach of death, yet he may be sottish and insensible, and then whatsoever difference of state they are entering upon, there may be no discernible difference in their departure hence; and so you see your question will not serve to the purpose you propounded it for.

Phil. Come, *Biophilus*, leave these sceptical artifices, these captious questions, do not seek out ways to muzzle your own Conscience, or impose upon your reason; a Judgment there will be, and it is all the wisdom in the World to be prepared for it. It is in your power by the grace of God to order matters so, that we shall rather hope and wish for it than fear it, and what vast odds is there between them two? You are sensible that it is only a Judgment following death, that makes death terrible, at least to our minds and understanding. Indeed it's possible our bodies may be disturbed at the assaults

*The wonderful
comfort and advantages of being
secured against a
day of Judgment.*

assaults of it ; but meer death can never shake our minds, or discompose one thought, if we are satisfied that all will be well after it : and what an happy and desirable condition were it, to be out of the reach of that King of terrors, to see light through that dark Vault of the grave, to out-live all a mans fears, and to live to his hopes ? What a strange alteration will that one thing make in a mans projections and designs, in his countenance and in his spirit, and in the whole management of himself ; for who can be afraid of any other accident that hath no cause to fear death ? Who will be concerned about riches, or be much discomposed whether his temporal affairs succeed well or ill, that is provided for Eternity ? Who will stoop so low, as to lay any stress upon fame and reputation, that hath approved himself to God and his own Conscience, and can stand the shock of the great Tryal of the day of Judgment ? He that is in a condition not to fear death, will have no reason to fear Men or Devils or Spirits or solitude or darkness, but may be as bold as a Lyon, and cannot probably be tempted either to express a mean passion, or to do a base action ; to be sure he will crouch to no body, flatter and humour no body : for no body can hurt him, and so his life is easie as well as comfortable, forasmuch as he hath no body to please but God and his own Conscience.

But, as I was saying, this is to be prepared for ; Salvation is not a matter of course, nor the Judgment a meer piece of state and formality, but infinitely sacred and solemn ; the Judge is wise and holy and just, the Tryal strict and severe,

severe, the Doom irreversibile, the misery intolerable, if a man miscarry, as well as the felicity unspeakable, if he stand right at that Tribunal: and to all this the critical time draws on apace; we feel our selves daily dying, therefore it concerns us to do what is to be done out of hand.

Bioph. I am convinced that it is the wisest course to provide for the business you speak of, if it could be done without too much trouble.

Phil. Ah! *Biophilus*, can any care be too great in such a concern? Can any thing seem troublesome that may at once secure us from all other troubles? But the trouble is not great neither, it is but being sincerely and heartily religious, and all is done.

Bioph. That is soon said, I confess, but not so soon done. Besides, I am never the wiser for such a general advice; for there are so many Religions in the World, that it's hard to know which to trust to. Some sublime Religion to such a height of Spirituality (as they call it) that a man cannot tell what to make of it; and again, some make no more of it than honest Morality. Some dress it up so fine and gawdily with so many Trappings

and Ornaments, that it's hard to find what the naked truth of the thing is; and others render it so plain and coarse, that a man is tempted to despise it. Some

represent it so thin and subtle, that a mans reason can take no hold of it; and others propound it so grossly and absurdly, that a man had need have a good stomach to it, or he could not digest it. Some make it a very easie thing, a

The different representations of Religion, a great temptation to Scepticism.

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The different representations of Religion, a great temptation to Scepticism.

trick of Wit, a meer Notion, but the becoming of a Party, or a bare believing; nay, a peculiar Garb, an hair Shirt, or a Fryers Girdle doth the business. With others it is a matter of infinite difficulty, and hath so many nice and strict observations belonging to it, that they are able to discourage any pretence to it. In a word, it seems to me to be what the Painter pleases, forasmuch as I see some describe it out of the pleasantness of their own sanguine phancy, and others out of the black humor of their hypochondriac passions: So that upon the whole matter, I think I had as good maintain my own Character, and withhold my assent till men are better agreed amongst themselves upon the point.

Sebast. God forbid, *Biophilus*, for that you cannot do, unless you will adventure to be damned, as certainly you must, if you be found to be of no Religion.

Bioph. Why, have you less charity for men of my temper, than for all the World besides? Must a Sceptist be certainly damned, if there be a Judgment?

Sebast. Far be it from me to be uncharitable towards any men, if I could help them; but I must tell you, I have less hope for that man that hath no faith at all, than for him that hath a bad one; and it must be a very bad Religion indeed that is not better than none. For though by reason of the variety of Perswasions (which you take notice of) a man may be fatally so misled, as to perish in a blind Devotion; yet certainly he that is so phantastically wise, as to be of no Religion at all, cannot be saved. But what need is there of either of these? There
are

are a great many false Religions, it is acknowledged, but there is a Truth too, and that not so hard to discern as you represent it, if a man sincerely apply himself to the search of it.

Bioph. Now you have nickt the business, you think, as if every Country had not the true Religion, or every mans own perswasion were not the truth, at least if they be allowed to be their own Judges.

Sebast. Good *Biophilus*, do not jest in these matters. I know you are a witty man; but do not turn the edge of it against your own Soul. Come, I'll tell you a Religion that all the World shall agree in, and my Soul for yours, you shall be safe, if you will comply with it. Do not stare, it is no more but this, *live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*; or if you will have it in other words, resolve with your self not to do that thing (whatever come of it) that you cannot answer to God and your own Conscience, and do every thing within your power that may approve and recommend you to both, and thence-forward fear not a day of Judgment.

Bioph. Now you speak to the purpose indeed, that I must needs say is good counsel, and such as I think all the World is agreed in; therefore I thank you for it, and I will try to follow it.

Phil. God prosper your resolution, *Biophilus*. And now, *Sebastian*, that we are happily come to this point, I pray give me leave to put *Biophilus's* question a little more home to you I thank God I am sensible of the great day approaching, and make some conscience of being

provided for it; but because I would not for all the world be mistaken in my measures in a business of that moment, I crave the assistance of your judgment how far that care extends, and particularly what it comprises. The reason of my solicitude herein (besides the consequence of the thing it self) is, because I have heard it delivered as a standing Rule by some men, That the only sure preparation is, that a man live every day as if it were the last he had to

Scrupulous and phantastical rules of preparation for the day of Judgment reproved.

live. Which Doctrine hath often raised scruples in my mind, and I suspect it may have had the like effect upon others; and to tell you my thoughts plainly, I look upon it as unpracticable and inconsistent with the common affairs of life; for most certainly on that day, which I thought would be the last I should live, I would not fail to dismiss all other business whatsoever, I would scarce eat or drink or sleep, but wholly apply my self to acts of devotion. Now if that Rule be true, Religion is a more anxious thing than I was aware; and if it be not true, I pray make me understand what is the truth in this matter.

Sebast. I do not know why you should lay much stress upon my judgment in such a case; but if you will have my opinion, it is plainly this; that the Rule you speak of is far more devout than judicious; for as you well observe, since God Almighty hath cloathed our Souls with bodies, and placed us in a world of business, it cannot be that he should expect we should in the whole course of our lives so singly and solely apply our selves to the affairs of another

nother World, as we should think fit to do just when we are going off the stage, and solemnly preparing our selves for an immediate appearance at Gods Judgment-seat. If therefore those men (you speak of) had prescribed that we should every day think of the day of Judgment, as not knowing how soon it may be upon us, or that we should take care every day to advance in our provision for it, they had delivered a great and a necessary Truth; but when they speak as if they meant, that we must do nothing any day, but what we would do, if we were sure it were our last day, they thwart the very order of Divine Providence in the condition of men, and the constitution of the world; they condemn the practice, and call in question the state of the best of men; they lay a snare for the Conscience of the weak and timorous: and in a word, they obtrude an impracticable notion for the most concerning and necessary Truth.

But you are not to wonder, or be troubled at it. For though there is generally more defect of devotion than of knowledge in the world, yet there are some particular men wherein the former exceeds the latter, and such men please themselves in a pretty saying, without being able to judge of the prudence of it; and whilst they go about to awaken some secure and careless persons to a serious sense of their eternal concern, are not aware that they afford matter of everlasting scruple and offence to those that are truly tender and conscientious.

It were easie to give you sundry instances of this superfine high strained Divinity; but there is one I will mention for its affinity with that

before us, *viz.* you shall find it dogmatically delivered by some seeming great Casuists, That in certain and indisputable things, it is a mans duty to do that which is best of the kind, and in uncertain and controverted cases to take the surer side. Now if these things were laid down as prudential advices only, to direct a man which way to incline himself, they were very useful; but to make them express measures of duty, is to make more Laws than God hath made, and condemn more things for sin than he condemns, and consequently cannot chuse but imbroil the Consciences of men. For suppose Prayer be better than secular business, then upon this Principle I must turn *Euchite*, and spend all my time in devotion. Suppose there be fewer temptations in a Monastick life than in common Conversation, then every one that is careful of his Soul, must retire into a Cloister. If there be difficulties attending Magistracy and publick Employment, then I must fold up my hands and do nothing but go into my Cell, and pray God to amend the World, though I be called to the other. If bodily Exercises and Games have some snares in them, I must allow my self no recreations; nay, I shall be put endlessly and anxiously to dispute, whether it be better to give a poor man two pence or a shilling or five shillings, &c. whether I shall pray three times a day or seven times a day; whether an hour or two hours. And indeed every thing I go about will afford inextricable difficulties upon these Principles.

But that by the way only: As for the business in hand, trouble your self no farther than to live every day well, and to be sure to do
nothing

nothing you cannot answer ; be always getting ground, and growing better and better ; as near as you can , do every day something that may turn to account another day, and then comfortably await Gods time.

Phil. I thank you heartily both for your direct answer and your digression : and I pray pardon me , if I come a little closer to you yet. I know you live under a comfortable prospect of the day of Judgment, and I am confident you neither would or could enjoy that even tranquillity, if you were not upon sure grounds. Now my request is, that you will be so free with me ; as to make me acquainted with your whole management of your self: For though I have a rule to walk by, yet for fear I should misapply it , and either through Superstition and Scrupulosity overgo it, or by the carelessness of my own heart fall short of it, I should be very glad to have an example to interpret it to me.

Sebast. I clearly perceive you either love me too much , or know me not so well as I thought you did, in that you think of making me your example. Alas ! *Phil.* little do you think how many follies and infirmities I labour under, and as little what qualms and dejections of spirit I sometimes feel within my self.

Phil. I confess, I do not know you so well, but that I desire to know more of you ; and though it be a great thing I ask of you, that you should absolutely unbosom your self to me ; yet you that have done me so much good already, I hope will not deny me this advantage of your conversation.

Sebast. Ah , dear *Phil.* you may command me

me any thing ; but I tell you, my life hath too many blots in it for you to make a Copy of : in truth , such a precedent will indanger to make you too remifs.

Phil. Now you discourage me more than ever, and make me fufpect that it is an harder thing to be faved than I imagined , fince you find fuch difficulty in it.

Sebast. Good *Phil.* excuse me from faying any thing of my felf; but (if it were not too tedious for this time) I would give you the History of an holy Friend of mine , which I had from his own mouth, and that I affure my felf will be of more ufe to you , than what you feem fo paffionately to defire.

*Eulabes's History
of his own Life,
and preparations
for Judgment.*

Phil. Of whom do you mean ?

Sebast. Of my dear Friend *Eulabes* now with God , a Perfon of as great Sanctity of life and comfortablenefs of Spirit , as Earth can eafily admit of.

Phil. I have heard much of the Fame of his Piety , but I never had the happinefs to know him. For Gods fake let us have his ftory, fince you will not gratifie me in my firft request.

Sebast. I remember the time well when I made much the fame request to him , which you have now done to me. And he after he had for a good while modestly declined giving me fatisfaction therein (by fuch excufes as it is not neceffary I fhould now repeat) and I had replied to them as well as I could ; at length yielding to my importunity, he began thus.

‘ Dear Friend (quoth he) though from the
‘ firft date of our acquaintance our converfa-
‘ tion

‘tion hath been so intimate, and my breast hath
‘been so open to you, that I scarcely know any
‘thing by my self that you have not been pri-
‘vy to; yet because you are pleased to enter-
‘tain the curiosity to inquire further after me,
‘I will not stick to tell you as well what hap-
‘pened to me before the commencement of our
‘friendship, as also such things as (in regard
‘they passed only betwixt God and my own
‘Soul) may be unknown to you, though they
‘were transacted since.

‘Know then, (said he) that about such time
‘as I had out-grown the meer follies and infir-
‘mities of my youth, and began, together with
‘the advance of my bodily strength and vigour,
‘to make also some essays of understanding and
‘discretion, I quickly found that by the Spring-
‘tide of my blood, and the great increase of
‘bodily spirits, several very impetuous passions
‘and inclinations boiled up in me, notwithstan-
‘ding those small efforts which my reason (as
‘yet) could make to the contrary.

‘This I then thought (and do still) to be a
‘case common to other men with my self; and
‘since I have considered of it, I am apt to think
‘that our wise Creator so ordered the matter,
‘that these two Combatants, Sense and Reason,
‘should grow up and enter the Lists together,
‘to the intent that as Reason should not be with-
‘out its Antagonist to hold it in play: so on
‘the other side, those bodily powers should not
‘be left without a Guide to conduct, controul
‘and manage them.

‘However, hereupon bodily inclinations
‘growing daily stronger and stronger, and my
‘Reason and Conscience not being yet foiled
‘or

‘or corrupted, there arose a very strong conflict
 ‘in me between them, and that as yet of very
 ‘doubtful issue; forasmuch as both being parts
 ‘of my self, I could not easily resolve which side
 ‘to incline to.

‘In the mean time (as God would have it)
 ‘calling to mind the solemnity of my Baptism,
 ‘I remembred that then when I was dedicated
 ‘to Christ, and entred as a Candidate of eternal
 ‘Life, I had renounced the flesh with the affe-
 ‘ctions and lusts. Hereupon therefore I resol-
 ‘ved to withstand them if I could, and to this
 ‘end begged the assistance of Gods grace, and
 ‘(by the advice of my Parents and those good
 ‘persons, who having been Sureties for me, had
 ‘a desire to discharge their Consciences of that
 ‘Trust which lay upon them) I applied my self
 ‘to the Bishop for Confirmation. Whereby
 ‘having obtained not only the Blessing of my
 ‘Spiritual Father, but made Christian Religion
 ‘now my own act and choice; and besides, had
 ‘put such a publick obligation upon my self, as
 ‘would render it very shameful for me to go
 ‘back or retreat, I from that time forward was
 ‘under a more awful sense of God and Religion,
 ‘and felt frequent motions of the holy Spirit
 ‘within me.

Here I remember I a little interrupted him, applauding his singular felicity in being so early engaged in the way of Heaven, by which means that course was now grown habitual to him, and his accounts much easier at the day of Judgment.

But he proceeded, saying, ‘It is true indeed
 ‘it was Gods great goodness to awaken me to
 ‘a sense of my duty thus early, as I have told
 ‘you,

' you ; but then what by the allurements of pleasures, which have always too poignant a relish
 ' with younger years, what by ingagement in
 ' business which grew upon me afterwards, and
 ' what through the contagion of example which
 ' surrounds a man with too common instances
 ' of carelesness in these weighty matters, I was
 ' drawn off from any close attendance upon Religion, until it pleased God in his wise Methods of Grace to lay his hand upon me in a dangerous fit of sickness ; and this partly, as
 ' it stained all the beauty of the World, which
 ' heretofore allured me ; partly also, as it mortified and enfeebled those bodily powers which
 ' before were too potent in me, but principally
 ' as it gave me leisure and inclination to recollect my self ; I thereupon (seeing nothing but
 ' death before me) fell into a great concern for
 ' another life, and so by degrees came to a solemn resolution of making Religion my chief
 ' business, and took all the care possible, that
 ' so I might be prepared for the great day of
 ' Tryal.

' Now because this is the point which (I perceive) you inquire after, I will acquaint you
 ' with the method I pursued ; and to deal faithfully with you (as I hope I did with my own
 ' Soul) the stress of my preparations lay in these
 ' three things.

' First, Because I was sure that an holy life
 ' must needs be the best Pass-port for the other
 ' World ; therefore I considered how I might
 ' keep my self closest to my duty, and walk in
 ' all the Commandments of God as blameless as
 ' it was possible.

' Secondly, Because I knew that I had failed
 ' here-

‘ heretofore , and feared I should again in several things fall short of my duty ; therefore I bethought my self how I might do something extraordinary, if not to make up those defects, yet to shew at least the sincerity of my love to God and Religion, and the value I had for the World to come.

‘ Thirdly and principally, In consideration of the Purity and Justice of God , and the strictness of his Laws, I desired and endeavoured to interest my self in the Satisfaction and Intercession of my Saviour.

1. ‘ For the first of these, namely, the approving my self to God in the integrity of an holy life, I considered that eternal Life not being a thing of course , or naturally due to men , but the singular gift of God , our hopes of it and title to it must depend upon the performance of such conditions as he should think fit to impose : and forasmuch as no man can know Gods mind , and what he will be pleased with, unless he himself reveal it ; therefore in the first place I did not content my self with humane Writings and Moral Discourses , nor much less to conform my self to the measures and customs of the World , but set my self daily and diligently to study the holy Scriptures, and took the measures of my duty, and the rule of my life thence. And to this I joyned daily and earnest prayer , that it would please Divine Goodness not only to make me understand his Will , but guide and enable me to perform it ; that he would preserve me from prejudices , from inadvertency , from foolish opinions and rash actions : and this I performed not customarily and formally,

‘mally, as if I complemented God Almighty,
‘but with my utmost vigour and intention of
‘spirit, and never thought I had acquitted my
‘self therein till I found my heart warmed with
‘its own motion.

‘More particularly, because I found that
‘hard study and sickliness of body, had made
‘me somewhat subject to disorders of the Ir-
‘scible (as heretofore health and plenty had
‘inclined me to the Concupiscible); therefore
‘I vehemently implored the Divine Grace for
‘my relief, and have been frequently constrain-
‘ed to allay a storm of passion with a showre
‘of tears.

‘Besides this, I took special care to keep out
‘of vicious and licentious Company, which I
‘was confident if it did not taint me with some
‘ill example, would be sure to cool my heat,
‘and abate my edge to Religion: and contra-
‘riwise, I contrived as much as possibly I could
‘to keep such Conversation as was likely to
‘provoke and inflame me in the course I had
‘propounded to my self.

‘And lest all this should not be sufficient to
‘secure me of my intentions, every evening I
‘erected a petty Tribunal within my self, and
‘called my self to account for the day past, if
‘I had slipped any opportunity of doing or
‘receiving good; if any rash word or action
‘had escaped me; if any earthly or sensual af-
‘fection had been stirring in me; if I had been
‘guilty of any instance of injustice, that here-
‘after might rise up in judgment against me,
‘I repented and made my peace with God and
‘man, as far as it was possible, before I slept. I
‘examined my self also what progress I had
‘made

‘made that day towards Heaven, whether, now
 ‘I had spent a day of my life, I was a days
 ‘journey onward of my way, and what I had
 ‘to shew for the expence of that day. I always
 ‘took, as I said, the Evening for this business,
 ‘both in regard of the privacy and quiet of
 ‘that season, and also because I found that
 ‘then the solitude and darkness of the nights
 ‘were easie, and the sleep comfortable when I
 ‘had first cleared all scores; and besides, I was
 ‘cautious, lest the interposition of sleep should
 ‘have made me forget the passages of the former
 ‘day, if I had deferred the account of them till
 ‘the next.

‘Besides all this, I found it necessary (and
 ‘accordingly practised) to set one day aside in
 ‘every month, and more solemnly and wholly
 ‘dedicated it to this business, to romage my own
 ‘heart, to compare my self with my self, and
 ‘to observe how much I advanced in my great
 ‘design.

2. ‘The second part of my care (as I told
 ‘you) was to efface those errours of my life,
 ‘which had either wittingly or unwillingly
 ‘escaped me. Now to this purpose, I was very
 ‘desirous to do some exemplary good things,
 ‘that I might lift up the head, and raise the
 ‘spirit of Piety in the World; and the rather,
 ‘to the intent, that if I had done any hurt by
 ‘ill example formerly, I might, when I could
 ‘not revoke the act, yet prevent the contagion
 ‘of it. And besides, I was watchful of, and
 ‘gladly embraced all opportunities of demon-
 ‘strating the sincerity of my love to God,
 ‘though it was by a costly or difficult service;
 ‘for I made no doubt, but the more there was
 ‘of

‘ of self-denial in a virtuous action, the greater
‘ was the evidence of Grace and Divine Love
‘ in performing it. Upon this account I could
‘ well have been content it would have pleased
‘ God to have given me a just occasion of some
‘ smart, but tolerable sufferings for him; and
‘ with this prospect I have put my self upon
‘ some measures of Charity that were to the
‘ very utmost of my ability, if not beyond it;
‘ I have interposed my self voluntarily for the
‘ rescue of some desolate and oppressed person
‘ from a potent Adversary, and thereby deri-
‘ ved the trouble upon my self which I protect-
‘ ed that person from; I have put my self for-
‘ ward to reclaim some peevish deluded Sectary,
‘ or some vicious person, from whom I have
‘ had very ingrateful treatment for my good
‘ will, that by all or some of these I might
‘ shew that I loved God as well as my self: not
‘ that I had any proud conceit or opinion of
‘ Supererogation in any thing I could do or suf-
‘ fer; so far from it, that I am sensible, that
‘ when I have done all I can, I must acknow-
‘ ledge my self an unprofitable servant, and
‘ that I have not done so much as was my duty
‘ to do. Notwithstanding, as a Subject, that
‘ hath been in Rebellion against his Prince, or
‘ some way or other disobliged him, will be
‘ glad to be employed in the most difficult ser-
‘ vices, that he may shew his Loyalty, and re-
‘ cover his Favour: So I who was sensible, that
‘ in many things I had offended the Divine Ma-
‘ jesty, could not chuse but prize an occasion of
‘ doing something more than matter of strict
‘ duty, that I might shew, that nevertheless I
‘ loved him: And indeed it seems to me, that
‘ those

'those who pretend so much modesty and humi-
 'lity, as to be scrupulous of over-doing in this
 'manner, are only in reality afraid of loving
 'him too much, which I am sure is impossible.
 'And therefore I find that such free-will Offer-
 'ings give a mans heart great assurance, and
 'enable a man to look with the more comfort-
 'able erection of mind towards God and the
 'day of Judgment. So I observed *Nehemiah*,
 'Chap. 13. vers. 14. when he had shewn himself
 'publick-spirited and generously, and with con-
 'siderable difficulty and hazard to himself had
 'asserted the interest of the oppressed Jews and
 'their Religion, he then with an holy confidence
 'addresses himself to God in these words, *Re-*
 'member me, O Lord, for this, and wipe not out
 'the good deeds which I have done, &c. This, I
 'take it, is laying up in store a good foundation
 'against the time to come, this is, making friends
 'of the Mammon of unrighteousness, that when we
 'fail, they may receive us into everlasting habita-
 'tions. Such actions, I say, either of Piety or
 'Charity aforesaid, are as it were the drawing
 'a Bill upon God Almighty, to be paid in the
 'other World, and making a wise and frugal
 'Purchase of a Reversion in Heaven.

'Wherefore (as I told you) I studied all op-
 'portunities, and consulted the utmost of my
 'ability to do some remarkably good things,
 'that might be beneficial to the World or to
 'Religion when I was dead and gone, and en-
 'deavoured to sow such seed as whose fruit
 'should by the grace of God be fresh and lasting
 'to the very day of Judgment.

3. 'But when all was done, I laid the great-
 'est stress of all upon the third and last part of
 'my

‘ my preparation, and that was in interesting my
‘ self in the Satisfaction and Intercession of my
‘ Saviour. For besides the many and great fail-
‘ ings I was sensible of, I considered also the pu-
‘ rity of the Divine Nature was such, that *he*
‘ *found folly in his Angels*, and detested sin
‘ where-ever he found it; that his Law was
‘ strict and perfect; that it was impossible any
‘ thing should be acceptable to such a Majesty,
‘ or make amends for the breach of such a Law,
‘ but that which was perfect too; that nothing
‘ could make atonement for sin but a Lamb with-
‘ out spot; that nothing could successfully in-
‘ tercede for us but the only Son of God. There-
‘ fore I set an infinite value upon the discovery
‘ of the light and grace of the Gospel. I with
‘ all heartiness and thankfulness embraced the
‘ Terms of the new Covenant: I endeavoured
‘ to affect my self with the highest sense of love
‘ and gratitude towards my Lord Jesus Christ.
‘ I pleaded his Sacrifice in my Prayers, I fed
‘ my Faith with his Blood, I raised my hopes
‘ by having so powerful an Advocate with the
‘ Father; I comforted my self against the accu-
‘ sations of the Devil and my own Conscience;
‘ and all my black and melancholy thoughts, by
‘ the consideration that he was appointed Judge
‘ of the World, that was in humane Nature;
‘ who had been sensible of our infirmities, had
‘ experience of our temptations, and had so
‘ much good will to us as to dye for us. I ac-
‘ knowledged and adored his Divinity, I con-
‘ fessed him before men, I gloried in his Cross
‘ and Sufferings, I frequently observed the Me-
‘ morial of his Death and Passion in the Sacra-
‘ ment; I joynd my self to his Church, I ho-
‘ oured

‘noured his Ministers, I revered all his Institutions; and in a word, as the highest and truest honour I could do to him, I endeavoured to be like him, by imitation of his sincerity, purity, meekness and goodness, in confidence that upon these terms he would own me when he comes again in his glorious Majesty.

‘This (said he) hath been the course and care of my life, from such time as I became in earnest sensible of the concern of another World, and this is the sum of my constant preparations for the day of Judgment; and in this posture I endeavour always to be found whensoever God calls me. I confess I should be right glad (if it please God to give me opportunity) to make some more special and particular preparations against the approaches of death, if I could be aware of it, and to trim and snuff my Lamp against the Bridegroom comes; but for that Gods will be done: however by his Grace I hope I shall not be utterly surprised nor dismayed, having made this habitual provision for it. Thus far he.

Eulabes his more special preparations for death towards the approaches of it.

Phil. Your Friend *Eulabes* appears to have been a most exemplary, holy, and a wise man, and the relation which you have given us, as from his own mouth, exceedingly fits the Character of such a Person; for there is both a lively Spirit of Piety breathing in it, and withal such a becoming and proportionable modesty as sufficiently assures the real truth of the whole Narrative, forasmuch as I cannot suspect you would impose upon us herein; nor can I believe it easy
(if

(if possible) for an evil man to draw a Scene of Vertue with so many Arguments of probability. For my own part, I have been all along so affected with it, that nothing hath grieved me so much, as that you seemed to draw towards an end of your story, as well as the good man to the end of his life. And now I have a thousand questions, which I would gladly put to you further about him, but that I am afraid of being too troublesome to you, especially since it grows late. However I pray pardon me whilst I interrogate you a little about the last Act of so brave a Person. I remember you said he intended, if God gave him opportunity, to make some more particular and special preparations at the approaches of death; now I have a great curiosity to inquire, whether it pleased God to afford him such opportunities as he wished, and what use he made of them. Gratifie me in this, and I will detain you no longer at this time.

Sebast. Why therein, dear *Phil.* I will satisfy you as well as I am able. You must know therefore, that *Eulabes* having through the course of his whole life maintained a strict temperance, and now well advanced in years, it happened to him (as it is usual in such cases) by the good Providence of God, to have a gradual and leisurely dissolution; he was neither racked to death by the intolerable pains of the Gout or Stone, nor hurried out of the World in the fiery Chariot of a violent Fever, not stabbed by an Apoplexy, nor stupefied by a Lethargy, but was mildly and gently summoned by a lingering sickness, so that insensibly he felt himself dying. By this means he had both time,

strength and understanding to settle every thing according to his wishes. When therefore he saw the Harbingers of death draw on towards him, and that he could not long maintain the little Fort of life against the Confederate force of so many infirmities as besieged it, he then disposed himself for a Surrender.

In the first place, having formerly in better health made his Will, and settled his temporal Affairs, he now dismissed all business, forbid all impertinent talk, all troublesome Visitants, and discharged his Physicians also, as finding no farther use of them; and forthwith sent for the Physician of his Soul, the Minister of his Parish, a plain, hearty and sincerely good Man. And he being come, my Friend addresses himself to him, giving him hearty thanks for all the pains he had taken in the course of his Ministry in that place to do their Souls good. Wherein (saith he) it hath pleased God so to order it, that you have often come home to my case, and touched the very distemper of my heart, as if you had been within me; for which I humbly thank Almighty God, and again and again thank you, and pray God reward it in another World.

Now, Sir, (proceeded he) that great Judge of all the World is calling me to account of all the actions of my life; I have therefore sent for you to audite them before-hand, that so by your assistance I may either know my errors, and repair whatsoever is amiss, whilst yet I have a little time left me to do it in; or if I have stated my matters rightly, may appear with the better assurance at that Tribunal. I have always found you faithful in your Doctrine,
and

and I do not doubt but you will be impartial in this application

At this point I offered to go out, and leave them private; which he perceiving, took me by one hand, and the Minister by the other, and then continued his discourse. I will give you (said he to the Minister) the History of my life, at least I will not conceal from you any main passage of it, be it for me or against me, that so you may pass a judgment upon my spiritual state; and I desire you, my dear Friend *Sebastian*, to be present, who have been privy to the most critical moments of it, to the intent that you may witness against me before this Man of God, if I falsifie in any thing. This said, he laid open the course of his life, and amongst several other things, which either I do not now so well remember, or think not fit to repeat, he delivered the substance of that, whereof I have given you a large account before; and then he conjured him in the Name of God to deal freely and plainly with him upon the whole matter.

The holy Man (like a Jury, in a manifest case,) without long deliberation quickly brought in a Verdict of comfort to him. Which when *Eulabes* perceived, with his Eyes fixed upon him, and a countenance somewhat cheared; Well, said he, God be thanked, if it be so, as I hope it is; for I rest assured Almighty Goodness despises not the meanest sincerity. But I humbly and earnestly beseech you, Sir, give me also the Absolution of the Church, that I may go out of the World under the comfort of so publick and authentick a Testimony. Which when the Minister had solemnly performed, he intreated

treated him further to administer to him the Sacrament of the Lords Supper, that so (said he) seeing as it were my Saviour Crucified before my Eyes, and pouring out his Blood for Sinners, I may the more firmly believe the pardon of my own sins, and upon the Wings of Faith and affection raise my self towards Heaven.

This, after the interposition of Prayers and Meditation and holy discourse, was administred to him; but, Lord, what an ecstasie of devotion was the good Man now in! What tokens of humility, affection, thankfulness and intention of mind were then to be read in his countenance and deportment! Most certainly Christ Jesus was present really, though not carnally, and his Soul fed it self most favourily upon him. These things being done, he dismissed the Minister for that time, not without real expressions of his thankfulness to him for his pains and assistance, nor without a liberal alms to be disposed at his discretion amongst the Poor, earnestly intreating him to remember him constantly in the Prayers of the Church, that thereby he might be holpen on his Journey towards Heaven, where he hoped shortly to arrive.

Some time after this, when by some repose he had recovered a little strength, his Family was called together to his Beds side, with some others of his Friends and Relations; all whom he most earnestly cautioned against looseness of life, and profaneness of spirit, assuring them in the words of a dying man, of the great reality and infinite importance of Religion; he charged them, as they would answer it at that great Day which was certainly coming, that they should not suffer themselves either to be debauched into care-
lessness

lesness and lukewarmness, nor abused and cheated into phantasm and opinionativeness in Religion, but persist in the good old way, reverence their Minister, keep to the Church, and make the serving of God the greatest care and business of their lives. Then he discoursed admirably to them of the vanity of the World, the uncertainty of life, the comforts of Religion, and the joys of Heaven, till his spirits began to be spent, and his speech a little to falter. At other times he retreated into himself, and entertained converse with God by Prayers and holy Meditations, in which what were the elevations of his Faith, what the holy raptures of his Love, what humble abjections of himself at the feet of Christ. what resignations of himself to the will of God, what pleading of the promises of the Gospel, and recumbency upon the Intercession of his Saviour, we could not be privy to further than as we saw his hands and eyes earnestly lift up to Heaven, sometimes a stream of tears falling from his Eyes, and other times interchangeably a chearful smile sitting upon his countenance; in which posture bodily strength being now exhausted, he with a gentle sigh resigned up his Soul to God.

Thus I have given you the last passages of this good Man (now no doubt in Heaven) if I have not tired you with the relation, though I confess I am not very apt to suspect that, both because I have done it in compliance with your desire; and besides, I judge of other men by my self, and because I am never weary of thinking or speaking of him; therefore imagine other men may be of the same mind.

Phil:

Phil. Ah! Sir, so far from being weary of such kind of Discourse, that I could willingly have forgot all other things for it, and been glad this Evening-Conference had continued till to Morrow Morning; but I consider Devotion must not too much intrench upon Civility; therefore I return you my hearty thanks for my good Entertainment, and take my leave for this time.

Bioph. I thank you both for your good Company and your charitable offices towards my satisfaction, and I do already assure you of this fruit of it, that by your Conversation I have learnt that all Religion is not acting a part, and playing the Hypocrite, which I was apt to suspect heretofore; for I see you are so really hearty and in earnest in it, and yet men of greater sagacity than my self, that I tell you truly I begin to think it becomes me seriously to consider of it. Good night to you, good *Sebastian*.

THE END.

